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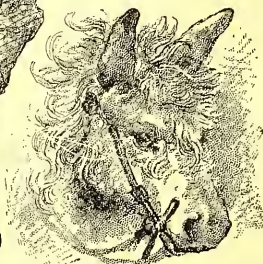
MARS JACK



CALEB



AUNT DINAH



BILLY



OLD PETER BROWN



MISS TESSY

CALEB

THE IRREPRESSIBLE.

BY
MARY MONCURE PAYNTER.

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CALEB, THE IRREPRESSIBLE.

CHAPTER I.

ENTER CALEB.

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts."

DE Lord hab mussy! Ef dat chile ain't after dem chickens ag'in! I 'clar foah'gracious, I's a gwine ter gib dat imp ob Satan sich a dressin' as he can't see outen his eyes ef I catches a holt on ter him," and Aunt Dinah waddled down the walk, with eyes glaring, turban awry and broom in hand, ready for the onslaught. She made straight for the hen-house, but when she opened the door, although there was a superabundance of evidence in the disturbed condition of the fowls that some one had been intruding, that some one was no where to be found. Here—there—every'where, she searched, for Aunt Dinah was not to be overcome by obstacles. She would not give up until she had found the

object of her search, and had administered the whipping her arms ached to give the trespasser.

“O here you is,” she cried, stumbling over a figure in a dark corner of the old barn; “I’s got yer at last—yer black imp, yer!”

“‘The gods defend us!’ What on earth possesses you, aunty?” and the dark figure sprang through the open doorway, holding up both arms to ward off the blows that descended like rain.

Aunt Dinah dropped her broom, and threw up both arms in astonishment.

“Holy Moses an’ de angels! It’s Mar’s Jack.”

The tall figure was drawn up to its full height.

“Yes, it is Mar’s Jack,” half laughingly, half sternly. “What in the world possessed you to attack me in that manner, auntie? Why, I will be sore for a week,” he added, rubbing his injured members vigorously.

“I ’clar foah gracious, I’s awful sorry, Mar’s Jack. I fought it war dat imp ob a Caleb. Is you much hurt, honey?” Aunt Dinah asked anxiously, for Mar’s Jack was her darling, and she thought him the handsomest and best man in the world. “He’s none ob yo’ ‘po’ white trash,” she would say, shaking her head emphatically. “He has de blue blood ob de Templetons an’ Peytons runnin’ in

his veins ; knows who his ancestries war, an' ain't got no cause to be shamed ob none on 'em, eider."

Aunt Dinah always prided herself upon the fact that she had once belonged to the Templetons. "We 'long ter de F. F. Vs.—we do."

Mar's Jack may not have been the handsomest and the best man "any whar," as Aunt Dinah declared, but certain it is that the tall figure and clear-cut, manly face would attract more than a passing glance, even in the crowded street.

Aunt Dinah was very fearful lest she had done some injury to the pride of her heart.

"Are you sho' you ain't hurt, honey?" she asked, anxiously.

"Well, that is the coolest proceeding—to knock a man over the head, and then ask him if he is hurt," and Jack laughed, in spite of himself.

"Well, I thought for sho' I had Caleb," said Aunt Dinah, apologetically. "He's been after dem chickens ag'in, an' I 'peals ter you, Mar's Jack, how on airth's dem hens a gwine ter set, ef he keeps scarin' dem off dere nests. Dey 'll git discouraged bime by, an' leave dem nests fur once an' fur good, an' won't come back no mo'."

"You are right, I presume," answered Jack, rubbing a bump on the back of his head; "but

where, O where, is the delinquent for whom I suffered?"

"Does you mean Caleb?" asked Aunt Dinah, putting her head upon one side, not exactly comprehending his meaning.

Jack nodded and frowned ominously, but with a twinkle in his eye, nevertheless.

"Yes, aunty. Where 's Caleb?"

Aunt Dinah straightened herself immediately, and her eyes glared.

'Dat 's de question: Whar is he?" and stooping to pick up the broom, "dat 's jis' what I 's a gwine ter find out, ef it kills me."

"All right. Lead the way, and I will follow. I owe Caleb a grudge for having received a part of his whipping. We will enjoy the pleasures of the chase together, auntie, provided you will let me take him in hand as soon as you get through."

Jack spoke seriously, but his eyes were full of laughter, for it was his intention to save poor little Caleb this whipping, if possible.

He led Aunt Dinah into all sorts of places—places where Caleb was least likely to be; but, ah—luckless fate—Jack looked under the smoke-house, and there, crouched in one corner, was Caleb.

Jack raised up quickly, and turned to go away ; but Aunt Dinah's eyes were too sharp for him.

"O ho! Dar you is, my precious sonny," she cried exultantly. "You don't dislude dis niggah no more! Come out from under dat smoke-house, right-away!"

"O mammy," cried a muffled voice, half tearfully, half coaxingly, "you ain't a gwine ter wallop me, is you?"

"Nebber you mind what I's gwine ter do. You come out from under dat smoke-house! You heah me? Come, or I'll crawl under arter you, an' den you'll wish you'd nebber been borned."

Now, if Caleb had known what was best for him, he would have remained where he was. The impracticability of Aunt Dinah's crawling into a space that was scarcely large enough for his little body, never presented itself to his mind. He was too terrified to think of anything but that Aunt Dinah was coming after him, and perhaps would kill him; so he crawled slowly to the front of the smoke-house, and Aunt Dinah clutched at him and drew him eagerly out.

What a poor, forlorn little object!

A short fat boy, attired in a faded checkered

shirt lying open at the neck, a pair of old pantaloons turned up round the ankles and held up by one suspender, and boy and clothes so covered with dirt as to be scarcely recognizable—that was Caleb.

“O mammy, you ain’t a gwine ter wallop me is you?” was the first cry.

“O, no! I ain’t a gwine ter wallop yer, is I? I ain’t been a huntin’ you fur de las’ half hour fur nothin’. You come long ter de kitchen wid me an’ see whedder I’s gwine ter wallop yer or not;”—and Aunt Dinah dragged Caleb along the walk towards the kitchen.

“I clar foah gracious I won’t do so no mo’—” whined Caleb, drawing back from her in terror.

“Well, dat won’t help you now, sonny. You’s a gwine ter git a lickin’ fur dis all de same”—and Aunt Dinah pushed open the kitchen door.

Caleb looked appealingly at Mar’s Jack—and Jack forthwith began to plead eloquently.

“’Tain’t no use fur you ter say one word, Mar’s Jack. I’d like ter please you but I ain’t a gwine ter hunt half an hour fur Caleb an’ den be cheated out ob givin’ him a lickin’ arter all. He’s been a needin’ a good lickin’ fur de las’ week, and I’s gwine ter settle up all accounts ’foah he’s one hour older.”

Jack saw that remonstrance was useless.

"At least send him to me, aunty, when you get through with him."

"I will, Mar's Jack, ef he kin walk," she answered, shutting the kitchen door and locking it.

Jack strolled around on the veranda and turned into the long hall filled with old-fashioned portraits—"his great ancestries" as Aunt Dinah called them. Pushing open the library door, he encountered a tall stately lady dressed in the deepest mourning, who greeted him with a smile.

"I was looking for you my son," she said in a low, sweet voice. "Come in, I want to talk with you."

Jack offered her his arm and led her to an easy chair near the table.

"Well, mother mine," he said, seating or rather throwing himself into a chair, "What is your pleasure? I am all attention."

Mrs. Templeton unlocked her writing-desk and untying a bundle of letters, handed him one. Jack looked at it curiously. It was directed to "Miss Alice Peyton" (Mrs. Templeton's maiden name), and was written in a straggling, school-girl hand. A letter, yellow and old, telling of girlish hopes and fears, of girlish dreams, few of which, alas, were ever realized. Jack read it and turned to his mother wonderingly.

Mrs. Templeton smiled.

"You wonder why I gave you that, Jack, dear? It is a sort of prelude to what I am going to say. The letter was written by Agnes Lester, the dearest friend I ever possessed. One whom I loved dearly, and whom I never saw after our happy school days were ended. Here is her picture," and she handed him a miniature in a velvet case.

Jack looked at the bright, happy face.

"Looking in those laughing eyes, one would scarcely think that life held aught but happiness for her. But in truth her life was a very sad one," said Mrs. Templeton, speaking as if to herself.

"But never mind that," she added, quickly. "I must speak about another matter. It's a proof that I'm growing old, Jack, when I revert so much to old times," and she smiled sadly.

"This morning I received a letter from Mr. Lee, Agnes' husband, written from Philadelphia. He wants us to receive his daughter as an inmate of Woodburn, as he is going abroad on business for a year or so. She has never known a mother's care, as Agnes died shortly after her birth. Her father writes that she has just finished school and he longs to place her under my care as she is young and thoughtless and needs a guiding hand. So

Jack, dear, you have the whole story. What do you think of it?"

But Jack, dear, was looking at the miniature in his hand and wondering if the daughter were as pretty as the mother.

"Excuse me mother," he said, looking up a moment. "I did not quite understand your question."

"I asked you what you thought of it."

"Of it? Oh, it's very pretty," holding the miniature out at arm's length and eyeing it critically.

"I do not think you were paying much attention," said Mrs. Templeton, quietly. "I mean what do you think of my inviting Katie to Woodburn?"

"Well, the fact is," answered Jack, still looking at the miniature, "I think I would write for her to come here immediately."

Mrs. Templeton smiled.

"Like mother, like daughter, does not always hold good," she said, quietly. "A pretty face is worth but little if it is not possessed by a true woman. I would rather have my son marry a true, noble woman, even though she were unlovely to outward view, than one whose pretty face was her sole worth."

"She is not fair to outward view,
As many maidens be,"

sang Jack, laughingly.

"One likes a little of the outward view, too, sometimes, mother. Now, I should not love you one bit the less if it were otherwise ; but don't you suppose I take a certain pride in knowing that I have a handsome mother ?"

Mrs. Templeton looked pleased at her son's praise, but she only said, "We are wandering from the subject, Jack, dear. I am to request Miss Lee to make her home with us as soon as she is prepared to do so, then ?"

"Certainly ; by all means," answered scheming Jack.

"That is all, at present, my son," and Mrs. Templeton tied up the bundle of letters. "The miniature, Jack, dear," she added, holding out her hand.

"I'll keep this, if you please, mother," he said, coaxingly.

His mother made no comment but locked up her desk as Jack slipped the likeness into his pocket, and stepping out on the veranda, he lit a cigar, and walked up and down with his hands behind him, wondering if a young lady would be contented at

quiet old Woodburn—wondering if this afore-mentioned young lady were pretty, and if he would like her. Despite his mother's remarks he did hope she would be pretty, for "twenty" and "forty" do not regard things from the same standpoint.

Jack was aroused from his reverie by a smothered sob, and, looking up, he saw a dirty little figure crouching down upon the steps, the very picture of abject woe.

"Helloa, Caleb," he said, coming round and seating himself on the veranda steps, "pretty well used up, are you not?"

The black fists were dug into the eyes.

"Mar's J-Jack, has you got any ob d-dat liniment in yo' house?"

Jack could not resist the temptation to laugh.

"Liniment? O, plenty of it! You can take a liniment bath if you want it."

Caleb sobbed. "I—I reckon I does. Mammy mos' tucken all de skin offen me."

"You don't like a whipping very well, then?"

Caleb looked up resentfully.

"'Course I don't like ter git a wippin'. Reckon you wouldn't nieder ef you was me."

No. Jack remembered the blows Aunt Dinah had given him by mistake, and did not envy Caleb

his "wallopin'," as Aunt Dinah called it. However, Aunt Dinah's strength usually gave out after the first few blows. And although Caleb howled and danced as though in a fair way of being murdered, his "wallopin's" were not of as much consequence as one might suppose.

"Look here, Caleb, if you have such an antipathy to a whipping, why in the name of common sense don't you behave?"

Caleb dug his bare toes into a crack on the steps.

"I don't keer whedder I 'haves or not. Mammy allus licks me fur eberyting, so she does."

"Well, you see, Caleb, you have been so bad that appearances are against you. You are usually whipped on circumstantial evidence."

The little black face looked puzzled.

"Well, it hu'ts de same wharebber she licks me."

Jack threw back his head and laughed merrily.

"You are 'one by yourself,' Caleb, that's certain. But come," he added, rising and tossing away his cigar. "Don't cry any more, and I'll let you go over to Bellevue with me."

Caleb's sobs were hushed instantly, for Jack was his idol, and he followed him all around the old plantation like a little dog. He was allowed more liberty than was usually given to the servants at Wood-

burn, although Jack was a pleasant-tempered, easy-going master at most times. Caleb was the only child about the plantation, and Mar's Jack's especial protege, and Mrs. Templeton declared that, were it not for Aunt Dinah's timely "dressin's," the child would be positively unbearable. But these afore-mentioned dressin's had but a temporary effect upon this little personification of mischief, and his master was, in reality, the only person whom he obeyed. He worshiped Mar's Jack with a blind adoration, and was perfectly happy when at his side.

So, on this day in question, when his master proposed taking him to one of the neighboring homesteads, he sprang up from the step and commenced to dance a jig, forgetting that he had ever had a sorrow in all his life, much less a whipping, but one short hour ago. Jack's horse and buggy were soon ready, and away rode Mar's Jack with his little black shadow beside him.

CHAPTER II.

"There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion flower at the gate;
She is coming, my dove, my dear,
She is coming, my life, my fate."

CALEB had been perched upon the gate-post the whole afternoon in order to get the first glimpse of the carriage as it rolled down the avenue. Miss Lee had been expected in the morning, but when Mrs. Templeton had returned from the station alone, her arrival was given up for that day, at least, by every one but Caleb.

He declared he knew that she would come, and startled Mar's Jack a dozen of times by exclaiming, "Heah it comes, Mar's Jack; heah's de station ker-ridge," until, disgusted with so many false alarms, Jack ensconced himself in an easy chair on the shady side of the veranda, and placing his feet upon a level with his head, with more regard to comfort than to appearance, fell into his old habit of day dreaming. He did not intend to sleep. O, no! Just wanted to think a little. But thinking and napping are very closely allied on a warm Summer afternoon,

and Jack was soon wandering in the pleasant paths of dreamland.

There were green fields, rippling brooks, beautiful flowers, sweet, low music, lovely laughing faces—until all seemed to vanish before one slender form, and a pretty, girlish face,—a bright vision that led him on and on—now near—now far away.

“Mar’s Jack,” said a voice at his elbow, “wake up! Miss Katie’s done come.”

Jack rubbed his eyes sleepily.

“Eh! What’s up, Caleb?”

“O, I beg your pardon.” This to the pretty girl in gray who stood looking at him with a comical expression of face.

Caleb instituted himself master of ceremonies. “Mar’s Jack, heah’s Miss Katie.”

Jack rubbed his eyes as if to recall himself to this world, and then sprang to his feet, looking very sheepish.

“I beg your pardon, Miss—Miss Lee—I didn’t know you were here; at least I was rather unprepared to see you at present. I had forgotten where I was; I was thinking so busily.”

The blue eyes twinkled. “Rather a novel way of thinking, is it not?” was asked, slyly

Jack was becoming unpleasantly conscious of the fact that perhaps he had been asleep.

"May be I indulged in a little doze," he admitted reluctantly

Again the blue eyes twinkled. They were very saucy eyes—and Jack was becoming unpleasantly conscious of the fact, that perhaps he had—snored.

No! He would not permit himself to be so humiliated. The subject must be changed.

Jack drew himself up to his full height and said, extending his hand, with rather an unsuccessful attempt to appear self-possessed, "I suppose I may say welcome to Woodburn, Miss Lee?"

A soft, dimpled hand was laid in his brown one. "Certainly, although your first appearance did not indicate a welcome," she said, laughingly.

"First appearances are not always truthful ones," Jack answered, looking into the bright face.

"Like mother, like daughter, holds good in this case, certainly," he added, mentally. "She little knows I have her exact counterpart in my vest pocket."

It was a very pretty face that Jack looked upon, —not beautiful, perhaps, but saucy, piquant, expressive. It was a very pretty figure, too, clothed

in soft gray cashmere. Katie was pretty, and Jack was content.

"Have you seen mother?" he asked, after a pause.

"No, sir, I have seen no one but yourself and this little fellow," pointing to Caleb.

"You see the rickety station vehicle fell to pieces at the end of the road, and I had a dreadful time getting together innumerable boxes and bundles. Indeed, I do not know how I should ever have arrived here if Caleb had not relieved me of part of my load; and according to him, nothing would do when we reached the house but for me to see 'Mar's Jack.' So depositing my bundles on the steps, I came around here. My things are on the front steps in 'confusion worse confounded.' I do not know how I ever can get them into the house," with a pretty gesture of despair.

"That's too bad," said Jack, looking very annoyed. "I am so sorry this should have happened. We expected you this morning, and mother drove over to the station for you, so that is the reason there was no one to meet you this afternoon. But come, and I will introduce you to mother. Regrets are useless now."

Mrs. Templeton met them at the door.

She started at the sight of the girlish figure and the tears gathered in her eyes.

"You are very like your mother, dear," she said gently, stooping to kiss the soft cheek

The blue eyes grew thoughtful.

"So papa says. But I do not know; I have been motherless all my life, you know," looking up wistfully.

Jack looked at his mother reproachfully. Why did she not cover the upturned face with kisses. He was sure he would have done so, had he been in her place.

People never do appreciate their blessings.

"How did I miss you, child," asked Mrs. Templeton. "I went over this morning after you. Did you miss connection in changing cars?"

"Yes, ma'am. And I had a dreadful time," laughed Katie, proceeding forthwith to relate her grievances.

"I am ever so sorry," began Mrs. Templeton, but Jack laughingly interrupted.

"Do not apologize, mother, I have wearied Miss Katie enough already."

"Well, I will show her to her room, for I know she is tired. Tell Pompey to bring up her satchel and boxes."

After Katie had been duly deposited in the blue room, Jack went out to find Caleb.

"Look here, young man," he said, taking him by the ear and walking him off to a secluded corner of the veranda, "I want to ask you a few questions. If you don't tell me the truth I'll skin you alive, sir, do you hear?"

"Yes, sah!" answered Caleb, with alacrity. Such a fate was not to be met with calmness. "I 'clar' foah gracious I'll tell you de truf."

"Well, say this after me," Jack frowned solemnly.

"I—Caleb."

"I, Cabe."

"Swear to tell Mar's Jack the truth."

"Sw'ar ter tell Mar's Jack de trufe."

"The whole truth."

"De whole trufe."

"And nothing but the truth."

"An' nuffin' but de trufe."

"There now," said Jack, solemnly, "you are under oath, and woe to you if you prevaricate. Look me in the eyes, sir. Was I asleep this afternoon when you brought Miss Katie around on the veranda?"

"Yes, sah! 'deed you war fas' 'sleep."

“Very good, or very bad, rather. Look me in the eyes again and beware—Did I—mind—now—did I snore?”

“I ’clar’ foah gracious you did. You opened yo’ mouf jes’ so,” and Caleb opened his mouth to the fullest extent and made numerous nasal sounds imitative of snoring.”

“I must have presented a very enchanting appearance,” said Jack, ironically, half amused and half annoyed.

“What did the young lady do?”

“Does you mean Miss Katie?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, why she jes’ frowed back her head and laffed awful hard. She stuff her hank’fish in her mouf ter keep from laffin’ so she did.”

“Oh! she did, did she?”

“Deed she did. An’ I war awful mad at her ’cause she laffed at you, deed I war, Mar’s Jack.”

“Why in the name of common sense did you bring her around there?” and Jack shook Caleb fiercely.

Caleb whimpered “I nebber meaned no harm. I telled her you’s e mos’ dead ter see her an’——”

Here he was interrupted by another shake.

“You telled me ter tole yer de trufe an’ den yer mos’ shakes my head off fur it,” Caleb whimpered.

“Well, never mind. I do not desire to have any more conceit taken from me. Cease, I implore, your harrowing tale, lest I curse the hour that gave me birth!” said Jack, tragically, and Caleb, seeing that Jack was not displeased, put his hands into his pockets and began to whistle.

A pretty picture, framed by the open doorway, met Jack’s view as he strolled leisurely up the walk.

Katie was arrayed in soft, fluffy white, while a pearl comb fastened the coil of dun brown hair.

“Sweets to the sweet!” said Jack, gallantly, clipping some crimson roses from the bush.

“O, thank you! How lovely!” blushing rosily as she fastened them at her throat.

“Very lovely!” echoed Jack, looking at the roses in her cheek.

“Do you know I think everything is lovely here,” said Katie, after a pause, taking a general survey.

“Ahem! Thank you! Everything, I suppose, includes yours truly?”

Katie tossed her head and looked at him saucily.

"Not necessarily. I haven't formed any opinion of you as yet. You do not look exactly lovely when you are asleep, for instance.

Jack held up his hand deprecatingly.

"Don't! please don't. Am I never to hear the last of that unfortunate nap, Miss Lee?"

Katie laughed. "Well, I won't tease you any more. But, changing the subject, will you do me a favor, Mr. Templeton?"

"With pleasure, provided you return the obligation. Please do not call me Mr. Templeton."

"What shall I call you?"

"He's Mar's Jack," said Caleb, who was out on the lawn, lying on his stomach, with his heels in the air.

"Silence, young man," said Jack, frowning majestically upon him. "Who told you to interfere?"

"Well, you is Mar's Jack an' nuffin else," persisted Caleb.

"Shall I call you Mar's Jack?" asked Katie, laughing.

"Call me 'Jack,' without the prefix.

"You'd better say Mar's Jack, les' you wants a lickin'," put in Caleb, rolling over on his back and grinning at Katie. "Dat's what I gets ef I'se' pertinent,—'deed I do."

Jack started down the steps, but Caleb was over the fence in a very short space of time, and stood grinning through the rails.

"I will take Caleb's advice and call you Mar's Jack," said Katie, laughingly.

"Now for your favor," said Jack, coming back and standing beside her.

"Let me see. O yes—Mr. Tem—I mean Mar's Jack, won't you please come into the hall and tell me about the old portraits? They are too gloriously ancient for anything."

Jack put his hand up to his forehead meditatively.

"Too gloriously ancient," he repeated slowly. "That is an expressive term."

Katie blushed. "I think you are too mean for anything to make fun of my enthusiastic expressions. But you see," she added, seriously, "I fell into that way of talking at school, and it is just awfully, I mean, very, very hard to remember that I am no longer a school girl, but a lady of leisure."

Jack looked amused.

"Don't take it so seriously, Miss Katie; I only wanted to pay you back a little of your own coin."

Katie held out her hand. "Let us bury the hatchet. If you will promise never to make fun of

my energetic expressions, I will never, never tease you about that snore. Is it a bargain?"

"Agreed," answered Jack, bestowing a much greater pressure upon the soft hand than occasion demanded.

Brown eyes looked into blue eyes, and Jack's doom was sealed.

"Come, fulfil your promise," said Katie, after a moment's pause, turning to go into the hall.

"At your service, mademoiselle," answered Jack, following. "Where shall I begin?"

"Who is this fierce-looking old gentleman with the powdered wig, knee pants and velvet coat?"

"That is the honorable, my great, great grandfather. Ugly old customer, isn't he?"

"I should say so. Looks as fierce and ugly as can be. Do you know," said Katie, stepping back and eyeing the old portrait critically, "I think he looks like you."

Jack subsided.

"Fierce and ugly and looks like me. You are very complimentary, Miss Lee."

Katie laughed merrily.

"O, well, I did not mean that, you know. But I think there is a family resemblance. Who is that lovely lady next to him?"

“That is Aunt Ruth Templeton, my father’s sister. Handsome, isn’t she? She had a very romantic life, so I’ve heard.”

“Did she! O, do tell me about it. Won’t you?”

Jack thrust his hands into his pockets as though that were any aid in story-telling, and began.

“Well, she was a great belle, in her day, I believe. Had lots of beaux and all that sort of thing, you know. She was engaged to a Mr. Ashely, a young fellow from the North, somewhere. But the course of true love did not run at all smoothly, and she jilted him, expecting him to return to her. But she reckoned without her host that time, for he was as proud as Lucifer. One night, at a large party, he was asked to sing, and he sang, apparently for the company, but she knew that it was intended for her, and she knew that he would never come back to her again. It was quite a pretty little song. Shall I repeat it?”

Katie put her head upon one side.

“Why won’t you sing it?”

“Modesty prevented my offering to sing it for Miss Lee. Or, rather, more truthfully speaking, a fear that she might not remain after the first verse, if I should attempt to sing.”

“O, I am a lenient critic! So do not be afraid.
Sing for me, won’t you, please?”

And Jack, bowing, complied.

I lov’d a lass, a fair one,
As fair as e’er was seen;
She was indeed a rare one,
Another Sheba Queen.
But, fool as then I was,
I thought she lov’d me too,
But now, alas, she’s left me,
Falero lero loo.

“To maidens’ vows and swearing
Henceforth no credit give;
You may give them the hearing,
But never them believe,
They are as false as fair,
Unconstant, frail, untrue,
For mine, alas, hath left me,
Falero lero loo.”

“Thank you. A very pretty song, but the sentiment is false,” looking up archly. “Maidens can be true, despite your poet.) I don’t think that was a bit romantic but very silly—don’t you? She should not have broken off the engagement in the first place, and he should have sought a renewal in the second place. Why, if I were a man,” said Katie, waxing vehement, “and loved a woman dearly, I would stand a great many rebuffs in order to make her mine. True love conquers all things.”

Jack laughed.

"I am sorry you were not there or you might have straightened out matters for them. But marrying the one you love does not always make one happy. You see that handsome, spicy-looking old lady in the black satin gown and lace neckerchief. Well, her husband was desperately in love with her, and married her. But many's the time the poor fellow wished that she had jilted him before their marriage, for she was well versed in the use of that unruly member, the tongue, and led the poor simpleton a hard life of it."

"What a very handsome face this is," said Katie, stopping in front of a portrait at the end of the hall.

"That is my father," answered Jack, lowering his voice. "He was killed by a fall from his horse about five years ago. It was a terrible blow to us, and one from which mother, I fear, will never recover. She is greatly changed from her old, bright self. But I weary you," he added, quickly. "I forget the subject is only of interest to me.

"There," changing his tone, "do you see that portrait opposite; that lady's wedding was the first I ever attended. The ceremony was performed in an old Episcopalian Church. I will tell you all

about it sometime. By the way, we must visit the old church some day. You like to hear romantic stories, and there are plenty of them connected with the old building. But I have chatted enough. There is the tea bell."

"And I am ever so glad to hear it, for I am as hungry as a bear, if you will excuse my saying so," laughed Katie, taking Jack's proffered arm.

CHAPTER III.

"Tying her bonnet under her chin
She tied her raven ringlets in,
But not alone in the silken snare
Did she catch her lovely floating hair,
For tying her bonnet under her chin,
She tied a young man's heart within."

WHAT a pretty room this is," thought Katie, as she stood combing her wavy dark hair before the mirror the next morning. "Everything is a delicate blue—carpet, curtains, and toilet set. It just suits me," glancing involuntarily at the lovely face reflected in the mirror. "It looks so delightfully old-fashioned. Very refreshing after the stiffness and formality to which I have been accustomed at school."

And it was a pretty room with its four-post curtained bedstead, easy chairs, open fireplace, and bright brass andirons, decorated now in the Summer, with fancy blue paper and peacock feather fans. Above the mantel was another portrait of Ruth Templeton, and Katie gazed at it to her heart's content. The face had a strange fascination for her. The

dark eyes and sweet, sad mouth seemed to tell of some hidden grief, but a grief borne alone, for there was a certain pride in the sweep of the tall, graceful figure, and in the poise of the shapely head. This had been her room Katie knew, for, "Ruth Templeton, A. D. 18—," was embroidered on the table-cover, and several books were on the table, which were marked with her name. A small volume of poems, with numerous beautiful passages marked and re-marked, Katie noticed in particular. "To Ruth from Hugh," was on the title page.

"I suppose that 'Hugh' was the lover of whom Mar's Jack told me," mused Katie, turning over the leaves of the book as she stood awaiting the summons to breakfast. "Strange how little one knows—Come in," she added aloud, in answer to a rap on the door, which opened without further ceremony, and a curly black head was thrust in.

"I ain't 'lowed ter come in, heah; but Miss Katie, de breakfus' bell's done rung."

"Very well, I will go down in a moment or two," answered Katie, taking an extra peep into the mirror to see that the bewitching little curls about her forehead were all in captivating order.

Caleb edged a little further into the room.

"Nobody telled me to comed up heah, but I

fought mebbe dat you couldn't heah the bell or sum-fin" (inventing a story for the occasion).

Katie looked amused. It was a comical little face that looked into hers, with its big, bright, mischievous eyes and wide grinning mouth, disclosing two rows of such pearly white teeth as any society belle might envy. Caleb stood rubbing one leg up and down the other some time before he ventured to speak again.

"Say," he said at last, "you'se a gwine ter stay in dis house all de time now, ain't you?"

"I think so!" answered Katie, with a smile. "Does the idea frighten you very much?"

Caleb shook his head. "'Deed no, it don't, den. Say, you'se dretful pretty, ain't yer?" he added, grinning with all his might.

"I don't know," laughed Katie, "am I?"

"'Deed you is. You'se mos' as pretty as Mar's Jack's gurl."

Katie was on the defensive directly. A rival was something distasteful in the extreme.

"Mar's Jack's girl. Who is she?"

"Why, dat one he carries de pictur' of in his pocket. He lubs dat pictur', he do. I seed him look at it and kiss it mos' a hunnerd times a day."

Katie's lip curled slightly.

“He must be very sentimentally inclined.”

Then a bright thought came into the brown head.

“This little chap has sharp eyes. I will give him something to tell his beloved Mar’s Jack,” and Katie reached for a bundle of letters from her trunk. She took a picture from one of them, gazing at it longingly and pressing it several times to her lips.

Caleb watched her closely.

“You seems ter lub dat pictur’ awful much,” he said, grinning until every pearly tooth in his head was visible.

Katie sighed. “It is the likeness of a very dear friend of mine,” she said, softly, “one who is all the world to me.”

“Lemme see dat pictur’, won’t you, Miss Katie?”

This was rather an unexpected request. Even Caleb would know that gray hair and a gray beard did not belong to Katie’s lover.

So she prudently put the picture away.

“No, Caleb, not now. I must go down to breakfast. Here,” tossing him a paper of candy, “perhaps you have a sweet tooth.”

“Does you know,” said Caleb, standing with arms akimbo and feet wide apart, “after ’siderin’ matters I finks I’s e gwine ter like you berry much.”

"I am delighted to hear you say so," laughed Katie, "and I think I can return the compliment. But there is the second bell. I must go down-stairs now."

Caleb seized her dress as she opened the door.

"Miss Katie, I—I likes you. Don' you tell nobody I war up in yo' room. 'Ka'se I'll get a wallop-in' ef you do. Is anybody 'roun' heah?"

"No!" answered Katie, looking up and down the hall. "All's quiet. The coast is clear."

And Caleb scampered down the long corridor and disappeared through one of the numerous doorways.

"Well, what is the programme for to-day, Miss Katie?" asked Jack, after breakfast that morning, putting down his coffee cup and wiping his mustache.

"That question should be asked by Katie, I think, as you are the host," said Mrs. Templeton, smiling across the table at the son to whom she was so devoted.

"Changing my question to suit my mother's sense of propriety, what would you like to do, Miss Lee? I am at your service."

"Am I to decide?" asked Katie, looking up at him from under the dark lashes.

“Most assuredly!” wishing that she would always look at him in that way.

“Well, I should like ever and ever so much to go on a tour of exploration all around Woodburn.”

“Agreed!” answered Jack, rising from the table, “put on a big sun hat and some heavy shoes, and we will start on a grand exploring expedition. I do not think we shall discover anything that will immortalize our names, however.”

An hour afterwards the exploring party, consisting of Jack (looking cool and serene in his linen coat and straw hat), shouldering two fishing rods; Katie, with a large sun hat tied under her dimpled chin (she carried nothing but her own sweet self); and Caleb, with a huge lunch basket in tow, started for the river, after viewing every place of interest on the grounds.

“Does all this land belong to you, Mar’s Jack?” asked Katie, looking about her, wholly innocent of any motive in her question.

“No, not now. We own the house and the immediate grounds, nothing more. Mother sold the rest after father’s death, as well as all the slaves, except the house servants. You may have noticed how few we have. Aunt Dinah and Caleb are free. Pompey bought their freedom and father gave his

to him, but they all three remain with us. Caleb, I don't think would leave me even if I were to drive him away. Would you, Cabe?"

"'Deed, an' I wouldn't, den," answered the little fellow, looking up with shining eyes.

"What queer little house is this at the end of the avenue, Mar's Jack? I noticed it the first day I came, and wondered to whom it belonged."

Jack laughed.

"That is the residence of Miss Tessy Hepsworth. She is a comical genius, I can tell you; rides all over the country in a donkey cart, with her knitting and tracts. She knits and distributes tracts, while the donkey walks at about the rate of a mile a day. Indeed, if we see Miss Tessy coming down the avenue, we know that she will arrive at about the end of the following week. But let's stop a moment, and I will introduce you to 'Tessy, the peculiar,'" added Jack, rapping at the door, which was opened slowly by an odd-looking little body, who stood staring at them in a quizzical way.

"Good morning, Miss Tessy," said Jack, lifting his hat. "Fine day, isn't it?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Miss Tessy, laughing and shaking her cork-screw curls as though Jack

had said something peculiarly amusing; "yes, indeed."

"I have brought a visitor to see you, Miss Tessy," introducing Katie.

Miss Tessy laughed again.

"Well, now, that was good of you, to be sure. Come in, won't you?" she said to Jack and Katie, for Caleb was already in the room and seated on a chair. Miss Tessy and her home were things with which he was perfectly familiar, and he often regaled himself with a chase after her hens. It was a very queer little room, with its old-fashioned curtains and furniture, which Jack declared were bequeathed to Miss Tessy by Noah, and it was a queer little hostess who bustled about, placing chairs for her guests.

"You must excuse my seating you in the kitchen, my dear," she said, nodding her head at Katie; "but as the kitchen's the bedroom, and the bedroom's the parlor, why, it follows that the kitchen's the parlor. That's logic for you, Mr. Jack. In short, my dear, this is the only room I have."

"It is a very pleasant one, I am sure," answered Katie, sweetly.

Miss Tessy nodded.

"Oh, yes; it's well enough, but not what I've

been used to, dear. Now, when I was a girl"—Katie thought Miss Tessy must have an excellent memory—"Now, when I was a girl," she repeated slowly, "it was very, very different—wealth, servants, beaux—yes, dear," laughing and looking coy, "real handsome beaux, like Mr. Jack; but times have changed. I have none of these things now, dear."

Katie was not at all astonished at the lack of beaux.

"Where, oh, where are the beaux of her youth?" queried Jack, in an undertone, for Miss Tessy was very deaf.

"Now, may be you would not think it, dear," she said, all unconscious of Jack's remark, "but I was a beauty once—a real beauty," nodding her head several times, and laughing immoderately.

"Time worketh great changes," said Jack, solemnly, in the same undertone.

"Miss Tessy," he added aloud, putting his head close to her ear, "you have not changed much since your youthful days."

"La, now, Mr. Templeton," laughing and looking very pleased, "you don't mean it! I must get you some corn-bread," rising and going to the cupboard.

"Don't refuse ; she will be offended," whispered Jack to Katie, as Miss Tessy handed around her one article of entertainment.

Jack and Caleb slipped their pieces into their pockets, but inexperienced Katie took one bite, and that bite was sufficient, for, either as a matter of economy, or as a matter of taste, salt was unknown in Miss Tessy's corn-bread.

"Well, Miss Tessy," said Jack, rising at last, "we must take our departure. Come up to Woodburn, and see Miss Lee quite often, won't you?"

"Oh, thank you ; yes, indeed," and Miss Tessy bobbed her head vigorously as the exploring party moved away.

"What a queer little woman," said Katie, drawing a long breath.

Jack laughed merrily.

"O Miss Katie, that corn-bread !" he said, drawing his piece from his pocket, and tossing it away.

Katie made a wry face.

"Was n't it perfectly horrid ? I think you were too mean for anything, to let me eat it. It makes me faint even to think of that one bite."

Jack's eyes twinkled.

"I wanted you to taste some of our real old-fashioned Virginia corn-bread," he said, jokingly.

“ Well, to pay up for this, I will get Aunt Dinah to make you some corn-bread, and if you do not say it is the best thing you ever masticated, I am no judge, that is all.”

“ Miss Tessy is such a queer little woman, and she talked so funnily about her beauty and her beaux, as handsome as you are, Mar’s Jack.

“ I wonder,” and Katie glanced up slyly, “ I wonder if Miss Tessy ever saw handsome Mar’s Jack asleep, for instance ?”

Jack pointed one of the fishing rods at her.

“ Die traitor ! You have broken a solemn compact. You said you would never refer to that ‘ nap ’ again.”

“ Indeed, I could not resist the temptation ; forgive me this time, won’t you ?”

“ Never,” answered Jack, majestically. “ Henceforth all energetic expressions that proceed from a certain pair of lips shall be duly laughed over and commented upon. So guard your wayward tongue.”

Katie tossed her head.

“ I will be careful that you shall hear nothing but the purest rhetoric,” she said, laughing. “ But changing the subject, or rather returning to the original one, Miss Tessy must be dreadfully — I mean quite old.”

"Old? She is antediluvian. I never expect her to die. She will petrify some day."

"Tehee!" giggled Caleb, behind them. He had kept so silent that Jack and Katie had forgotten his very existence.

"What's the matter now, young man?" asked Jack, turning around suddenly.

"I war jest a finkin' what a funny angel dat ole 'ooman ud make."

Katie laughed merrily, and Jack drew down the corners of his mouth as he said, "I have a little proverb for you, sir! ('Speech is silver but silence is gold!') Observe the gold, do you hear?"

Caleb pouted.

"Well, I'se awful tired toatin' dis heah heavy baksit roun', so I is."

"Courage, comrade," said Jack. "But a few steps more and you will win the goal. Here we are," he added, tossing himself upon the grass. "Now for a jolly fish. I'll 'meditate my time away, and angle on.'"

"I never fished in my life," said Katie, watching Jack's preparations with great interest, "and I have not the least idea of how to go about it."

"You are not a second Isaak Walton, I see. Well, I will teach you to become an expert. First,

you must bait your hook ; here, Miss Katie," he said, his eyes twinkling as he held out an angle worm.

Katie jumped back with an expression of disgust.

"O the horrid, crawly thing ; I wouldn't touch it for the world."

Jack laughed.

"Alas," he said, tragically. "I had thought that you were braver than the rest of your sex. Here, Caleb, come bait this hook for me while I attend to Miss Katie's."

A yell from Caleb shortly afterward indicated that he had baited his finger as well as the hook, and Mar's Jack and Miss Katie hurried to the rescue. The poor finger was extricated, and Katie tore her little muslin handkerchief into shreds to bind the injured member, while Jack soothed the wounded feelings and wiped the overflowing eyes.

"Come now, don't cry any more," he said, soothingly. "There are plenty of worse things in the world than sore fingers. Go hunt for some sticks to build a fire while Miss Katie and I catch the fish to cook upon it. If you are ready, Miss Katie," he said, after Caleb had departed on his mission, "we will attend to business. Here is a pleasant place. Excuse me, but you must keep perfectly quiet and when you feel a tug at your line, just whisper and

tell me. Now, ready—one—two—three,” and the lines were dropped into the water.

Katie sat very still, holding her rod tightly and gazing intently down into the water. She was thinking of what a pleasant, old-fashioned place Woodburn was, and, yes, of what an agreeable master it had. Then she stole a sidelong glance at Mar's Jack, and she wondered if he were thinking of the pretty picture in his pocket. If she had but known he was thinking of the pretty picture at his side.

Presently Katie felt a tug at her line.

“Quick, quick, Mar's Jack, something's pulling my line,” she whispered.

Jack caught the line and pulled in a small fish.

“O, the poor little thing,” said Katie, putting her hands behind her, “I wouldn't take it off the line for anything. O, dear, put it back; I do believe it's dying.”

“Of course it's dying—what else did you expect,” laughed Jack.

“Well, I do hate to see anything suffer,” said Katie, compassionately. “I won't catch another fish to-day,” she added, resolutely.

“All right. I will do that part, provided you

will cook them after they are caught. You do not object that, do you, lady mine?"

"No," answered Katie, demurely, "I suppose not, or to eating them after they are cooked. I will attend to lunch while you are engaged in the slaughter of the innocents."

Ample justice was done to the luncheon, which was eaten without incident, save the lodging of a bone in Caleb's throat, which was only dislodged after a vast amount of pounding on the part of Jack and rubbing on the part of Katie. After luncheon they roamed about the woods in search of wild flowers, until, fairly wearied out, Katie seated herself at the foot of an old tree, and Jack threw himself upon the grass at her feet, while Caleb assumed his favorite position, viz.: lying on his stomach with his heels in the air.

"O, dear! I am so warm," and Katie began fanning herself vigorously with her hat.

"Put on your hat, you will spoil your complexion," laughed Jack.

Katie's lip curled scornfully.

"My complexion! Pooh! What do I care for my complexion? My face is not my fortune."

"If beauty is a fortune to its owner, you are very, very fortunate, mademoiselle."

The blue eyes looked searchingly at him.

"Are you a flatterer, Mr. Templeton?"

The brown eyes flashed indignantly.

"Do I look like a flatterer, Miss Lee? I expressed exactly what I thought. You know that you are pretty, bewitchingly pretty," he added, fixing the brown eyes intently upon the lovely face above him.

"O, dear! My net is coming off," said Katie, affecting not to notice his remark, and jerking at the rubber of her net. It snapped, the net slipped off, and the whole rippling mass fell around her like a veil.

"What shall I do?" she asked, in despair.

"Please don't do anything. Leave it just as it is, Miss Katie," said Jack, earnestly. "I never saw a prettier sight. Truly, the glory of a woman is her hair."

That reminds me of something funny, Mar's Jack," laughing merrily; "I must tell you about it. Two years ago I had the typhoid fever, and my hair all came out. It looked very well while it was short and curly all over my head, but when it grew around my ears I wore a false braid with it. There was a dreadfully sentimental young gentleman com-

ing to see me at that time, and I really think that he was in love with me."

"Don't doubt it," this from Jack.

Katie proceeded without noticing the interruption.

"Well, he was always raving about my eyes and my nose and my mouth and I don't know what all. That was his favorite expression, 'The glory of a woman is her hair,' and he teased me incessantly to let my hair down, until one day I said, 'Mr. Perkins, do you really want me to let down my hair?'"

"O, Miss Katie, do, please do! Let it fall in rippling masses at your feet, that I may toy with the wavy locks. Truly, the glory of a woman is her hair."

"Very well," said I, taking off my net and taking out the hair pins and laying the false braid in his hand. "You may toy with that as long as you wish." Well, you never saw any one so disgusted in all your life. I don't think he ever called upon me again," concluded Katie, breaking into a merry laugh, in which Jack joined.

"You are fond of seeing a poor fellow in an uncomfortable position," he said, remembering the fatal nap.

"Well, I am not fond of going without my supper," she answered, tying on her hat and jumping up from the grass. "See how late it is growing."

"By Jove, that's a fact," said Jack, picking up himself and the fishing rods.

"Here, young man, change cars for Richmond," he added, shaking Caleb who had fallen fast asleep.

"Don' you wallop me, mammy," whimpered Caleb, sleepily.

Jack looked up at Katie, laughingly

"Caleb gets so many 'wallopings,' he dreams about them. Never mind, you won't suffer any if you will jump up," he added, shaking Caleb again.

Caleb sat up, rubbed his eyes, looked around, comprehended the situation and grinned.

"I'se pow'rful glad dat I'se only dreamin'," he said emphatically, "I fought mammy were a gwine ter lick me," he added, jumping up and taking the basket Jack held out to him.

Mar's Jack shouldered the fishing rods, Katie gathered up the wild flowers, Caleb brought up the rear, with the empty basket, and the exploring party started homeward, having discovered nothing,

"But the little desperate elf,
The tiny traitor—Love himself."

CHAPTER IV.

“Two water drops that meet and mingle,
No art of man can e'er make single.”

RAIN! Rain! Rain! For three days the rain poured down incessantly, until Mar's Jack expressed it as his firm conviction that a second flood was in order.

Caleb's little nose had been flattened against the pane until that already flat member was scarcely recognizable as the organ for which it was designed.

Poor little fellow! These were lonely days for him. Mar's Jack and Miss Katie, read, chatted and sang together, seeming to pass the time away very pleasantly, despite the weather.

Mrs. Templeton was busy with her household duties and took no notice of the forlorn little boy, who wandered to and fro, finding no rest for the sole of his foot.

If he ventured to the kitchen door with the remark—"O mammy, I'se mos' outer bref fur sum-fin ter eat!" his mother's fierce looks and upraised

broom sent him trotting back to the house, with the feeling that he preferred solitude to such entertainment as Aunt Dinah had in store.

It was the last straw that broke the camel's back, when the rain ceased in the afternoon of the third day and Mar's Jack told Pompey to saddle the horses as he intended to ride with Miss Katie to Bellevue.

It was a mournful little figure that stood in the doorway, as Mar's Jack rode away with his pretty companion.

"He allus usen ter take me wid him eberywhar," he thought with a pang of jealousy, "but now he nebber wants me no mo' sence Miss Katie's done come. I'se gwine ter hunt up sumfin' ter do," he added aloud, with mischief in his eye, thinking of the hen house.

But the consequences attendant upon a raid on that domain, were generally fatal. So he abandoned the idea as impracticable.

A wade in the numerous puddles made by the recent rain was tried but was soon given up.

"Dat ain't no fun," he said, discontentedly. "Kase nobody keers ef I does get my clothes wet and dirty. Dey'se nebber any odder way but dirty fur dat matter. An' I wants ter do sumfin what'll

make dem big folks mad, so I does," he added, going into the house and seating himself upon the stairs, with thoughts bent upon mischief. "I know what I'se a gwine ter do," jumping up at last and proceeding to climb the wide stairway. "I'se gwine up ter de garret an' fin' sumfin' ter play wid, so I is."

He proceeded very cautiously, however, despite his determination to make "dem big folks mad," for the garret was forbidden ground, and Caleb knew that he would have to suffer the consequences if caught trespassing in that sacred realm.

So he tip-toed up the winding stairway leading to the garret, and opened the door noiselessly.

All was as silent as the grave, and as Caleb looked up and down the long, low room, filled with chests, boxes, trunks, old portraits, and innumerable articles, old and musty, a feeling of awe crept over him, and his first impulse was to run away as fast as the little black legs would carry him. The feeling was only momentary, however, for he was soon peeping into old chests, and hauling over the sacred relics of past centuries with very little reverence for antiquity or regard for value. He tried on old dresses and poke bonnets; encased his little black hands in lace mits, and minced up and

down the attic after the fashion of a miss of the eighteenth century. He dressed himself a la military, viz.: heavy coat, epaulettes, a three-cornered hat, and rusty sword, and then marched up and down, back and forth, until the little mice peeped at him wonderingly from their holes, and even the old portraits seemed to gaze with astonishment at this noisy intruder. Nothing disturbed Caleb, however. He scampered about to his heart's content, poking his flat nose into every hole and corner.

"Heah's some ledders," he said, pulling out the drawer of an old chest. "Dese heah ledders mus' a bin writ an awful long time ago. Reckon Moses or 'Lijah done writ dese."

Caleb's knowledge of the Bible ended with these two worthies.

"An' heah's an' ole fan," unfolding a huge flowered, satin fan, "ain't this gorg'is! Reckon some pretty lady like Miss Katie done use dis once. I clare for gracious, ef heah ain't an albung," taking out a book of photographs and seating himself upon the floor. He placed the book upon his knee and regarded the pictures intently. Pictures of those whose bright faces and merry voices had once gladdened old Woodburn; pictures of those once living and loved—now dead and forgotten.

At last Caleb closed the album, fastened the clasps and laid it back into the chest.

"What's dis heah hard fing in dis paper?" he questioned, tearing open an old yellow envelope. "Why, it's a ledder wid a ring in it," putting the little pearl ring upon his finger. "I'se gwine ter keep dis heah ring, so I is," holding it at a distance, and gazing at it with shining eyes. "I nebber had no ring in all my life, an' now I'se a gen'leman. I'se gwine ter hide it so nobody can't find it, too," putting it back into the envelope, which he slipped into his pocket.

The waning light reminded him that he was in danger of discovery if he remained any longer, so tumbling misplaced articles back into their places as best he could, Caleb assumed the most innocent look possible, and slipped down stairs, ready to welcome Mar's Jack whenever he should make his appearance.

Meanwhile our host and his companion were spending a pleasant afternoon at Bellevue.

Katie was chatting dress, fashion and so forth with Belle and Jessie Fairfax, two pretty, lively brunettes, while Jack and Wilton Fairfax talked agriculture and politics. Then the conversation be-

came general. Topic after topic was brought up, discussed and dropped unceremoniously.

"Do you sing, Miss Lee?" asked Jessie Fairfax, turning to Katie.

"I am sorry to say that I do not," answered Katie, looking appealingly at Jack.

"Thou shalt not—" began that young gentleman, solemnly, not heeding the signs she made him. "You are in danger of breaking one of the commandments, Miss Katie."

"Well, I don't sing much," persisted Katie. "I am one of those unfortunate creatures who does not do anything. I have not a single accomplishment," sighing in affected despair.

"Don't you paint, Miss Lee?" asked Wilton, seating himself beside her.

"That's rather a personal question, Fairfax," laughed Jack, "to ask a young lady if she paints."

"Miss Lee knows what I mean, I am sure."

"Certainly I do," answered Katie, raising the blue eyes to his face. "No, Mr. Fairfax, I do not even *paint*."

"Then do let me shake hands with you. You are quite a curiosity. But I am afraid you, too, will be affected by the fever, by and by. You see there is a young artist who comes down this way

every summer, and the girls lose their heads until he goes back again."

"Now, Wilton," put in Belle, deprecatingly.

"Well, it is so, Miss Lee. I am sorry to be the one to unfold this sad tale, but you should be enlightened on this subject. I will put you on your guard. Beware this young and handsome artist. My sisters draw and paint everything they can lay their hands upon. I am in constant terror for fear that I shall walk out some day with a landscape painted on my back. You do not know how I suffer."

"Wilton, do be still," pleaded Jessie; "what will Miss Lee think of us? He is a dreadful tease," she added, turning to Katie. "Why, the other day he brought one of my drawings and asked me if I would please label it, as he had been trying to find out what it represented for the last hour."

"Well, now, I appeal to you, Miss Katie," put in Wilton, "if it is not enough to make a man long for another life, to study over an idiotic, simpering-looking thing for an hour or so, and then to be told that it is his own picture. I always had very pleasant views of life until I found that drawing, and now I long to lay this weary form to rest beneath the summer daisies."

Katie laughed merrily.

"I sympathize with you deeply," she said, holding out her hand.

"We are the ones who need your sympathy," said Jessie, laughing. "But changing the subject, Miss Lee, I believe you *do* sing, and I shall not let you off this time. She is fibbing, isn't she, Mr. Templeton?"

"She says not," answered Jack; "but I beg leave to differ with her. You set the example, Miss Fairfax, and sing for us, won't you?"

"I will upon one condition, that you will sing with me. By-the-by I have a lovely new duet here, I want you to practice with me," she said, seating herself at the piano and running over the accompaniment, while Jack took his place at her side.

As Katie watched Mar's Jack bending over the pretty brunette, her heart misgave her, and she wondered if this was "Mar's Jack's girl," of whom Caleb had spoken.

"Now, Miss Lee, allow me," and Wilton offered Katie his arm, and led her to the piano after the duet had been duly sung and praised. Katie sat silent a few moments, running her fingers over the keys. Then the sweet, clear voice broke forth into song,

and the listeners were held breathless with expectancy.

The silence was almost painful as the last note died away, and Belle, who was standing near, stooped and kissed the lovely face.

"I could listen to your singing forever, dear," she whispered, softly.

Katie's face flushed crimson as she saw all eyes bent upon her.

"Somebody else do something," she said, with a pretty show of embarrassment, jumping up from the piano stool.

"There is the tea bell," said Wilton, breaking the spell. "I will do something quite vigorously in a few moments, Miss Lee," he added, laughingly, as he led the way to the dining-hall.

It was late in the evening 'ere Jack and Katie started homeward. Wilton and his sisters escorted them to the gateway.

"You have a lovely night for your ride," called Jessie Fairfax after them as they dashed down the road.

When they were out of sight this break-neck speed was gradually slackened into a walk.

"I have had a splendid time," said Katie, turning a bright face towards her companion. "I think

Mr. Fairfax and his sisters are ever so nice. He is quite handsome. Don't you think so?"

"I never saw anything very strikingly handsome about him," answered Jack, rather stiffly.

Katie's eyes twinkled. She delighted to tease.

"O, I think he is one of the handsomest men I ever saw. So very entertaining, too."

"He would feel flattered at your opinion, I am sure."

"Will you take me to Bellevue, real often?" coaxingly.

"I am always at your service," very coolly.

The laughing blue eyes were raised to his face. Very lovely, she looked in the soft moonlight.

"Do you know," she said, suddenly changing her tone, "I would like to live always on such a night as this. Now, I am not sentimental," she added, laughingly, "but really, Mar's Jack," becoming serious again, "there is something pure, almost holy, about a lovely moonlight evening. I wonder how anyone can doubt the existence of a Creator; don't you?"

Jack regarded her intently for a moment. He could not understand this child-woman; at one moment so gay and thoughtless, and at the next so serious and womanly.

"You are never the same two minutes at a time," he said, slowly, after a pause.

"Am I changeable?"

"Well, perhaps so," with just the suspicion of a sigh; "but I do have serious thoughts, sometimes, despite my seeming carelessness. And I often wonder why I have so much to make me happy and contented, while there are so many in this world who are dragged down by poverty and temptations, of which I know nothing, and to whom life itself is a burden."

"And yet," Jack let his bridle slip down upon the horse's neck, becoming interested as he saw the chance of an argument. "And yet, Miss Lee, you say that you do not see how one can doubt the existence of a Creator. If there is a great all-powerful being, why is suffering permitted?"

The pretty face grew very serious.

"That I can not tell. I remember once, when a little girl, seeing a lady working a mat, and I wondered why she used dark colors as well as the bright reds and blues; but when I saw the mat completed, I understood it all. The dark background brought out more vividly the bright colors. Perhaps life is like the mat, Mar's Jack, and when we see the whole design spread before us, we will understand why

pain is always mingled with our pleasure. But there," she added quickly, with a slight laugh, "you will think me dreadfully silly."

"That seems to me a very blindfold way of taking matters," answered Jack, pushing the argument, enjoying Katie's earnestness. "I must *see* and *understand*, before I *believe*."

Mar's Jack always declared that he would have been a lawyer, had not Providence ordained him a lazy fellow, with a comfortable income.

"Why, Mar's Jack" — Katie was waxing very vehement — "how many things there are in life that *you* can not understand, and yet you have no alternative but to believe them. You can not explain what life is, and yet you live. Now, Caleb never saw a pain," she added laughingly, "and as the old Doctor of Divinity said, 'There are all of the other senses over against the one sense of feeling, to prove that no such thing as "pain" exists;' and yet, after one of Aunt Dinah's whippings, I think Caleb will tell you, very emphatically, that *pain* exists."

"But, my dear little friend, you can usually see the effects of pain in the face, or in some part of the body."

“And so you can see the effects of the Creator in nature,” Katie answered quickly.

“‘Plato, thou reason’st well,’” laughed Jack. “Behold, O bright orbs, the fair philosopher of the nineteenth century,” he added, apostrophizing the stars.

Katie looked slightly vexed.

“I knew you would ridicule my serious vein; but I can not help it. I spoke as I thought, and as I felt.”

“And I would not have it otherwise, my fair little philosopher,” he answered, seriously. “I do not care much for these things myself, but a sceptical woman is, to me, the saddest sight on God’s earth.”

“Is it not the same with scepticism in man?”

“I would say ‘no’ to that, for woman may lead man to all that is purest and best, or she may drag him down to the lowest depths of perdition.”

“Now, it is you who are becoming serious,” said Katie, smiling; “but I will return good for evil, and say that I like you for it.”

Jack lifted his cap.

“Thank you! But, Miss Katie, changing the subject and descending to things ‘of the earth, earthy,’ here we are, at the edge of the woods, so

hold tightly to your bridle, for your horse is easily frightened."

"Oh, dear! I shall feel afraid, here," she cried, as they turned into a dark path; and she held tightly to the pommel of her saddle, as though that were any protection.

"I will see that you are taken care of," and Jack drew a pistol from his pocket.

"O mercy!" cried Katie, reining her horse to one side, "take that away, please. I am a great deal more afraid of it, than of anything in the woods."

"The remedy is worse than the disease," laughed Jack, putting the pistol into his pocket and riding up beside her. "But don't be afraid Katie. I will take care of you;" and he placed his hand over the soft little hand that held so tightly to the saddle.

They rode through the woods in silence, Katie's heart beating quickly at every sound she heard; then the silence was broken by a whisper:

"Mar's Jack!"

"Well, Miss Katie?"

"Is that pistol on the side next to me?"

"No, Miss Katie."

"Oh!" and Katie relapsed into silence; but she breathed more freely when they at last rode out into

the moonlight, and started down the avenue leading to Woodburn, in a brisk trot.

"There goes my hat, Mar's Jack!" she cried, reining in her horse.

"Take mine; it will probably stay on your head," he said, as he mounted his horse again, after obtaining her hat, and unsuspecting Katie placed Jack's cap upon her head.

"You know the penalty," he cried exultingly.

"And I'll suffer it, if you can catch me," she answered saucily, touching her horse with the whip and dashing down the long avenue, leaving her pursuer far behind.

She arrived at Woodburn, panting and breathless; but Mar's Jack was defrauded out of a kiss.

CHAPTER V.

“ Oh, my luve's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June,
Oh, my luve's like a melodie,
That's sweetly played in tune,
As fair art thou my bonny lass,
So deep in luve am I,
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till the seas gang dry.”

THE summer days slipped rapidly away, days filled with laughter and song, stirring times for quiet old Woodburn. The pretty girlish figure and bright laughing face, seemed even now a part of the old place, filling it with sunshine. The ringing laugh, and sweet clear voice, echoed through the old halls, and as Aunt Dinah said, “ We's gwine ter be mos' like corpses w'en Miss Katie goes 'way from heah. 'Ceptin' I'll hab enuff ter keep me 'live 'walloping' dat imp of a Caleb.”

She would do any thing to please, “ Miss Katie.” Indeed the only person, not even excepting Mrs. Templeton, who dared invade Aunt Dinah's kingdom during cooking hours, was her pretty favorite.

“ Aunt Dinah,” said Katie, one day, “ I have

come to stay a little while with you, as I'm dreadfully lonesome."

"Come right in heah, honey, and sit down. What's become ob Mar's Jack dat he's done lef' you 'lone?"

Katie seated herself upon the step.

"He has gone into town and I had some letters to write, so I did not care to go with him, as it is so warm," she said, fanning herself with her hat. "Don't you ever get lonesome, out here all by yourself, aunty?"

"Fo' goodness sake, honey. I don' hab no time ter git lonesome, now'days. Fas' as I git froo' wid one ting, dar's anudder awaitin', to be done—Tain't like it were 'fore Mar's Richard died, honey, wid a niggah fur dis and a niggah fur dat. Now dere's only me fur to cook an' Charlotte an' dat lazy Adelina fur ter to do de housework, an' Pompey an' Frank fur ter ten' de stables, and dat comprises our 'retina' ob sarvants. Times is changed, honey. Times is changed. W'en I tinks ob all I'se been troo wid I clar fore gracious I 'gins ter feel mighty ole."

"How old are you, aunty?" queried Katie looking up into her face.

"I dunno, honey. Reckon I'se 'bout twenty-

five." Then seeing the amused look upon Katie's face, she hastened to add. "Well, mebbe I ain't so ole as dat. You see I can't reckon time berry well. I war young an' likely bouten de time when Miss Ruf war a baby, so mebbe I ain't so ole as I tinks for."

"Can you remember much about Ruth Templeton, aunty?"

Aunt Dinah looked up from the cake she was stirring, "'Member—La, honey, de ideah ob my furgittin' any ting dat consarned my blessed chile. Why I nursed an' taken car' ob her w'en she were a baby, an' lubbed her better'n my own life tell de day she died."

"She was very handsome, so Mar's Jack says, aunty."

"Wasn't she, do! Han'some ain't no name fur it. She war buful an' she had crowds an' crowds o' bows, but she wouldn't marry none ob dem fur her heart were sot on a young fellah from the Norf, Mar's Hugh Ashely. But dey nebber got along togedder, some how. She lubbed him but she sent him 'way. It war allus a queer sarcumstance. She had a berry sad life. Did you ebber heah 'bouten her?"

Katie nodded.

“Mar’s Jack told me her story. She was not very happy, was she?”

Aunt Dinah sighed and shook her head, “No, ’deed she wan’t. But yer nebber seen anybody wid dem big brack melumcholy eyes what didn’t hab a sad life. It’s de sho’ sign.”

Katie smiled at Aunt Dinah’s superstition, but she made no comment.

“She war fated ter hab trouble. I ’member onct dat Mar’s Hugh gabe her a little pearl ring, an’ pearls allus bring trouble, you know. I ’member a bride what wo’ pearls at her weddin’, an’ she died a yeah arterwards. Pearls is *bery—bery* unfortunate. My po’ dear chile! I war wid her w’en she died, an’ she raised dem big brack eyes ter my face, an’ she says: ‘Auntie, I died of a broken heart,’ an’ den she passed away—my po’ unhappy baby!” and Aunt Dinah wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron.

“What became of young Ashely?” asked Katie, after a pause.

“Oh, he went up Norf, an’ married. By de way, he has a son what paints picturs. ’Deed, he’s quite a artis’, up Norf, somewhar. He comes down here mos’ ebery Summer, an’ stays at Bellevue, an’ all de gals is crazy after him. Gals is awful queer, any

how, chile!" added Aunt Dinah, measuring out some flour: "You nebber kin tell what dey is gwine ter do. Now, Miss Katie, dar war Mar's Richard's second sister, she had a beau come down from de Norf, an' she were allus makin' fun ob him, and said he war homely, an' had no fam'ly ancestries; an' what she do but go an' marry him, an' go up Norf, ter live. No, 'deed, you nebber kin tell what gals is gwine ter do. Now, mebbe you might marry Mar's Jack, an' come down heah ter lib. Dere's no tellin'," she added, measuring out some more flour, and buttering her pans for the cakes.

Katie's face flushed crimson.

"I don't expect to marry any one," she said, with a slight toss of her head.

"Sho! You jes' hush up, honey, fur you knows dat's a fib. De ideah ob a lubly young gal, liken you, not 'spectin' ter git married!

"Dey's no tellin' what you'll do, I tell yer. I've hearn gals say dey wouldn't hab some man, ef he's de las' man libin', an' den go an' marry dat bery man. Gals is so queer," and Aunt Dinah shook her head as though girls were mysteries far beyond her comprehension. "You see, chile," she began, but here she was interrupted by a little voice:

"Say, mammy, won' you gib me dem pans ter lick, w'en you gits froo."

Aunt Dinah put her arms akimbo, and gave Caleb one look, at which he trotted away as fast as the little black legs would carry him.

"Dat chile am de bane ob my life," she said, as she placed her cake in the stove.

"He 's a pretty bad boy, isn't he, aunty?" said Katie, looking after the retreating figure.

"'Deed, an' he ain't, den, chile," answered Aunt Dinah, quickly.

She abused him to her heart's content herself, but was on the defensive directly, if any one else dared say one word against him.

"Dat chile am bery smart, Miss Katie. You don' know all de 'cute tings he says an' does. Why, de odder night he rubs his foots 'gainst mine, an' he says: 'Has you got yo' shoes on in bed, mammy?' You see my foots is so hard, kase I goes 'roun' bar'-foot so much, dat dat chile fought I had on shoes, for sho. Oh, he 's a bery bright chile, 'deed he is," she added, with true maternal pride.

"It 's bery warm to-day, honey," she said after a pause, wiping her face with her apron as she sat down to wait for the cake to brown. "Dat sun

looks mighty little to make de earf so warm. How far is it from heah? Does you know, honey?"

"I don't know exactly," answered Katie, in an absent way. She was wondering why Mar's Jack did not make his appearance.

"De ideah ob you studyin' g'ogرافy, an' not knowin' dat!" said Aunt Dinah, contemptuously. (Aunt Dinah always applied your ignorance of any subject about which she might question you, to a lack of knowledge in "g'ogرافy.")

Katie laughed.

"I am not very well versed in astronomy, aunty. The sun is millions of miles away from us, I believe."

Aunt Dinah's eyes opened wide with astonishment.

"De Lawd hab mussy! Millions ob miles 'way, an' yet it's so warm! Dere's some mighty queer t'ings in dis heah worl', chile," she said, shaking her head, "an' de fac' is, de mo' you learn, de queerer t'ings seems."

Katie sat, tying and untying the ribbons of her hat in an absent way, and the blue eyes looked far into the distance.

"Yes, indeed, aunty," she said, thoughtfully, "the more you learn, the more you find there is to learn. It is 'why,' from the cradle to the grave.

Perhaps only in the great hereafter will this one query of life be answered."

"What! philosophizing again?" questioned a merry voice, and Mar's Jack sat down on the steps, beside her.

"Yes; and Aunt Dinah had the benefit this time," laughed Katie; "but when did you come? I did not know you were here until I heard your voice."

"And it was the sound of this musical voice, my lady Katherine, that drew your humble servant thither. Drawing near, I heard wise sayings fall from ruby lips, and profited thereby."

"Now, don't be silly, Mar's Jack; or rather, do be sensible. Say, by the by, have you a letter for me?"

"A letter?" affecting great astonishment, "how should I have a letter for you?"

Katie jumped up from the steps and clasped her hands together. "O, please, don't tease me Mar's Jack! I want one so much and I know by your eyes that you have one for me. Do give it to me, won't you?" she pleaded, earnestly.

"'Deed he's got a ledder," said Caleb coming up the steps, but taking good care to keep out of the range of Mar's Jack's boot, "I seed him wid one."

"O please give it to me?" pleaded Katie.

"What will you give me for it?" looking roguishly into the blue eyes,— "a kiss?"

Katie's lip curled scornfully.

"You can keep the letter," she answered shortly, turning upon her heel.

Jack burst into a merry laugh.

"I do so love to tease you, mademoiselle. You are such a nice subject for a good tease. Do you want your letter very, very much?" he added holding it out to her.

"Is dat ledder writ by dat gen'leman w'at you got de pictur of?" questioned Caleb, grinning mischievously.

Katie's face flushed and Jack looked up quickly.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Lee," he said bowing stiffly and handing her the letter. "I did not intend to keep a letter of so much importance to you."

Foolish Mar's Jack! Could he not see that the post mark was foreign?

"I was very anxious to obtain it," very softly, and with downcast eyes.

"So I perceived," with a slight laugh.

"Will you excuse me if I leave you? I want to read my letter," hesitatingly.

Mar's Jack bowed again very stiffly.

“O, certainly—Pray do not let me detain you.”

And Katie tripped away, with eyes brimming over with mischief.

Jack watched her until she disappeared through the doorway.

Then he turned slowly and walked away, while Caleb trotted like a little dog at his heels.

“Had Katie a lover? Of course,” mused Jack, “One so pretty, so interesting, could not but be admired and loved. It was not for him to pluck this pretty flower and wear it as his own. Other eyes looked upon it and other hands reached out to grasp it.

“Then why did she come here, filling the house with sunshine—only to leave a dreary blank behind her when she was gone? What right had she to steal his heart away by her very loveliness—only to toss it aside with contempt. Did she belong to another?” Jack could not bear the thought.

“Mar’s, Jack” said Caleb breaking the silence, “Miss Katie lubs dat pictur w’at she got.”

“Be still, Caleb, will you?” very gruffly, kicking a stone out of his way. “What do you know about Miss Katie or her letters either.”

“Well I does know ’bout dose ledders. Kase I seed Miss Katie kiss dem an awful lot an’ a pictur

too w'at she had. She lubbed dat pictur, she did."

"Kissed the picture? Humph!"

"'Deed she did. She kiss it mos' a hunnerd times. It war de pictur of an awful nice gen'leman like you Mar's Jack, wid brack eyes an' brack hair—an'—an'—" (Caleb was at his old habit of inventing for the occasion) "an' a brack 'stache ober his mouf. 'Dced he war awful han'some, an' I fink dat ——"

"Do be still, Caleb," Jack said, petulantly. "Go away and leave me alone, do you hear?" he added, stopping at the veranda steps.

"Yes, sah. Shall I tell Miss Katie not to kiss dat pictur no mo', kase you don' like it?"

"No don't say anything of the kind, do you hear? And take yourself off directly, sir," said Jack, making a move towards him, at which Caleb darted off, leaving Mar's Jack alone with his thoughts, which I fear were not very pleasant ones.

"'Tis the old, old story," he mused. "Many long for the prize that only one obtains."

He knew now how dear, how inexpressibly dear she was to him—how her very loveliness had twined itself about his heart.

Dreary would old Woodburn be. Jack shud-

dered to think of the long weary days without her bright presence.

“Why has she given me every encouragement? Is she a heartless flirt, and am I the plaything of the hour, to be picked up and cast aside at her pleasure?”

“No,” he said, fiercely, “she shall not trifle with my affections. She shall explain matters to me before I am an hour older.”

So determining, Mar's Jack walked down the hall and turned into the library.

CHAPTER VI.

"Never speak of love with scorn,
Such were direst treason ;
Love was made for eve and morn,
And for every season."

KATIE was seated in the big arm chair at the open window, the blue eyes raised thoughtfully toward the bit of blue sky that was visible through the trellis—and an open book lay unheeded upon her lap.

The black shadow (Katie's now as well as Mar's Jack's) was lying on the floor, running his little fingers along the vines in the carpet and talking away to himself with much ardor.

He sprang up at Mar's Jack's entrance and hid behind Katie's chair.

Jack eyed him sternly. "What are you doing here, Caleb?"

"I ain't doin' nuffin," said the irrepressible, peeping out at his master. "Miss Katie done tole me I could come in heah. Didn't you, Miss Katie?"

"Miss Katie is too busily and I presume too pleasantly occupied with her own thoughts to heed

us," Jack said, in a low tone, speaking to Caleb, but with his eyes fixed upon the pretty form in the arm chair.

The blue eyes were raised to his face.

"Did you speak to me, Mar's Jack?" she questioned, absently.

"I merely told Caleb that you seemed very pleasantly occupied with your own thoughts.

"They were very, very pleasant thoughts," she replied, dreamily.

"Pray do not let me disturb them," and Jack seated himself at the table and began to drum upon the marble with his fingers.

"O, certainly not," and the blue eyes were turned toward the sky again. But she knew, little hypocrite, that the brown eyes were fixed searchingly upon her.

Then all became silent. Naught was heard but the measured tick tick of the little clock upon the mantel.

Caleb, however, could not long endure this restraint. He moved restlessly to and fro. Presently he burst out with :

"Mar's Jack, why don't you an' Miss Katie git married?"

Katie's face flushed crimson, and Jack sprang to his feet.

"Walk yourself out of this room in a very short space of time, sir. Do you understand?"

Caleb edged around between Miss Katie and the window.

"I nebber said nuffin," he pouted, "'ceptin' I ax why you an' Miss Katie didn't git married. Dat's all."

"Miss Katie probably does not want me." Jack leaned against the table and folded his arms. "I am convenient as an escort and so on and so forth, but, you see, if Miss Katie attempted to keep an account of all her summer flirtations, if she considered them as anything serious, she would have her hands full. Ask her if I am not right?"

Caleb looked puzzled. He crept up close to Katie and smoothed her soft white hands with his little black one.

"Miss Katie, why don't you marry Mar's Jack? He's de bes' man dat eber libed."

The blue eyes looked roguishly down into the little black face.

"I don't believe, Caleb, that he has ever asked me to marry—"

The sentence was not finished, for Mar's Jack had her in his arms.

"I ask you now, my darling," he said, passionately, "for I love you very, very dearly. O, Katie, tell me anything rather than you do not love me. I can not live without you. My every hope, my every interest, is centered in you. Will you be my wife, Katie?" looking down into the blue eyes for his answer.

"O, dear!" said Katie, with a little gasp, "I can't breathe if you hold me so tightly. This is so—so—sudden, you see, I"—extricating herself from his arms—"I—well—please give me time to think."

"Time to think," he repeated, bitterly. "Time to think of what? Of another? Of my folly in loving you? No," he added, sternly, seizing her by the wrist. "As I live, Katie Lee, you shall explain matters to me. You shall tell me, to-day, this hour, this minute, if you belong to another."

Katie's eyes flashed.

"Shall is an emphatic word, Mr. Templeton. I will give account to no one for my actions," she said, haughtily.

Jack released the imprisoned wrist.

"Pardon me, Miss Lee; I forgot myself. I—O Katie—Katie," he added, yearningly, holding out his arms to her, "if you only knew how dear you were

to me ; if you only knew how unhappy I shall be when you are gone, you would come to me. Only tell me, Katie, have you given your heart to anyone ?”

“ Yes,” said Katie, in a low tone.

“ To whom ?” he asked, huskily.

“ To Mar’s Jack,” she whispered, and the next moment she was clasped to his breast, while Caleb looked on in astonishment.

“ He’s gwine ter kiss her face mos’ off,” he said to himself, shaking his little head and grinning. “ Now he’s a huggin’ her mos’ to def. Dey does awful queer, anyhow. One minute dey looks so mad like dey’s gwine ter fight, an’ de nex’ dey’s a huggin’ an’ kissin’. I don’ see what dey’s a sittin’ ober dah on de sofa for, a lookin’ inter each odder’s faces liken dey nebber seed each odder a foah. I ’clare foah gracious, I finks dey’s bofe gone crazy.”

But Jack and Katie were utterly regardless of Caleb’s opinion. Indeed, they seemed oblivious to the fact that two big round eyes stared at them wonderingly.

“ Katie,” said Jack, taking the soft little hand in his own, “ May I ask you one question ? What about the letters and the photograph ?”

“ The letters and the photograph ?”

“Yes, Katie.”

“The letters were written by a very dear friend of mine,” she answered, softly, the long lashes drooping upon her cheek.

“And the picture?”

“Is his,” without raising her eyes.

“May I ask his name, Katie?” rather stiffly.

“His name is Lee,” raising her eyes roguishly.

Jack looked rather foolish.

“Why, Katie, it is not your—”

“Father; why, yes, it is,” she said, laughing merrily.

“O, what a jealous boy you are! Now I will be interrogator for a while, Mar’s Jack. Whose picture do you carry around with you and kiss, ‘mos’ a hunnerd times a day?” as Caleb says.

Jack drew the miniature from his pocket and handed it to her.

“O, Mar’s Jack! Where did you get this? It is my dear, dear mother.”

And Katie gazed tenderly down into the sweet face.

“I know it, Katie. Mother gave it to me before you came, because I fancied the face, and I have kept it ever since because it was so very like my little darling,” he added, gently.

"Well, now," looking up archly, "I think you were very silly to carry around my picture and kiss it when I was right here all the time."

"But I couldn't then, you know," said Jack, stooping to take the benefit of his newly-acquired privilege, "so I had to do the next best thing as a substitute. All's fair in love, my lady."

"Tehee! You all lubs each odder awful much, don' you?"

"O, my evil genius, are you there?" asked Jack in affected horror. "Do you know," he added, turning to Katie, "I have become a firm believer in fatality. I am doomed to be haunted by that little specimen of humanity for the rest of my earthy existence. So I must submit to my fate like a stoic."

"I don' keer ef I is bad. Miss Katie done like me, anyhow. Don' you, Miss Katie?" Caleb asked, rubbing Katie's soft hand and looking up into her face.

"O, yes, Caleb, I like you very much when you are a good boy."

"Now, look here, Cabe, I do not intend to share with you so you had better trot off and leave Miss Katie with me," and Jack took both of Katie's hands in his own.

Caleb pouted.

"Well, I reckon Miss Katie done got two han's an' I kin hab dis one an you kin hab dat one. Don' you see, Mar's Jack?"

"I appreciate your kindness deeply," Jack said, making a low bow, "which hand do you prefer?"

"Dis here lef' one?"

"Very well," answered Jack, taking the other hand, and adding in a lower tone, "I intend to get the prettiest ring I can find for this little hand, Katie."

Caleb's eyes brightened.

"I done got a ring fur my han'," he cried exultantly, drawing the letter from his pocket and taking the pearl ring from it.

"Mysteries of Udolpho! Where did you get this ring, Caleb?" asked Jack, examining it curiously.

This question was a poser. The visit to the garret must not be disclosed.

"I done foun' dis heah ring an' dis ledder, dats all," he said hesitatingly, rubbing his toes along the carpet and eyeing Mar's Jack, half defiantly, half timidly.

"O you found it—did you? Let me see it," commanded Jack sternly, holding out his hand for the letter which Caleb delivered rather reluctantly,

fearing that it perchance might give some clue to his visit to the garret.

It was only the fragments of a letter, yellow and old.

"See if you can read it, Mar's Jack," said Katie, looking over his shoulder.

Jack held it up the light and read,

"I have always had a superstition about pearls. They say for every pearl a tear. Alas! The tears I have shed would far outnumber these shining pearls about my neck. I may be foolish and yet
_____"

* * * * *

"Here it is torn," said Jack, examining it closely, and continuing,

"I will lay aside this little ring, his gift, that reminds me so vividly of the past, and the happy, happy days, gone—now—forever."

"Katie," he said, thoughtfully, after a pause, "this letter was written by Aunt Ruth Templeton. I remember mother's telling me something about my aunt's superstition regarding pearls. I believe this ring was given to her by the lover she jilted."

Katie looked down at the pearl, with renewed interest.

"Poor Aunt Ruth," continued Jack musingly.

"But young man," he added, quickly, turning to Caleb, with a frown, "I want to know where you found this ring? Do you hear?"

Caleb edged away from him.

"I jis done foun' it some whar, dats all."

It was well for Caleb that Mar's Jack was in an excellent humor.

"Well that will not be all at another time," he said, half laughingly. "I will not scold now, but you are never to go to the garret again without permission. Do you understand me, Caleb?"

"Yes, sah," answered Caleb, with alacrity, delighted at escaping so easily.

Katie had been sitting very still with her eyes bent upon the floor,

"Mar's Jack," she said at last, "I prefer this ring to any other. May I keep it?"

Jack looked surprised.

"Certainly, my darling, if you wish. I wanted to place something very pretty upon this little hand. But it shall be as you wish."

"Here, Caleb, you found this ring, so it belongs to your hand."

And Caleb slipped the pearl ring upon Katie's finger.

"Now we's all done got begaged to each odder,"

he cried, grinning and clapping his little hands together.

“And this is the seal of our engagement,” and Jack drew Katie closely to him, and imprinted a kiss upon the warm red lips.

CHAPTER VII.

" And on her lover's arm she lean't,
And round her waist she felt it fold.
And far across the hills they went,
In that new world which is the old."

IT was a very warm, sultry afternoon. Mar's Jack lay stretched at full length upon a sofa, on the east veranda. Katie sat at a short distance from him, rocking in a low wicker chair and busily engaged in the vigorous use of a large palm leaf fan; which occupation probably made her warmer than she would otherwise have been.

They had been very quiet for a long time, the creaking of Katie's chair, as she rocked to and fro, being the only sound that broke the silence. Katie longed to know of what Mar's Jack was thinking. Was he musing of the happiness of the past few days? Or, was he thinking of how happy they would be in the days to come, when each——

A corner of the handkerchief that covered Jack's face was raised.

" Say, Kit, I have just arrived at the conclusion that a cigar would be perfection; may I smoke?"

Katie's face assumed a disgusted expression.

"Alas for the wide difference between supposition and fact. I have been attributing all sorts of sentimental thoughts to you, and you dispel the illusion by asking in the most common-place manner possible, 'May I smoke?'"

Jack laughed.

"Well, really, I have had very serious thoughts this afternoon. But just at that moment the idea penetrated my brain, that a 'smoke' would be in accordance with the general fitness of things."

"You will be allowed this indulgence upon one condition," answered Katie, "namely, that you fulfil a certain promise made some time ago. I shall not tell you what it is until you finish your cigar."

"All right," replied Jack, striking a match, "I submit to any conditions, so long as I may indulge," and he lay, the perfect picture of contentment, puffing his cigar and blowing the smoke in little rings into the air.

"Do you know, Katie," he said, suddenly, after a pause, "I am an abominably lazy chap."

"Has the truth of that very apparent fact just dawned upon your perception?" queried Katie, roguishly.

Jack drew a long puff at his cigar and became enveloped in a cloud of smoke.

"No, seriously," he said, at last, a thoughtful look coming into the dark eyes, "I have come to the conclusion that I am a very useless sort of fellow. In my college days I used to have very ambitious hopes of making a way and a name for myself in the world; but on coming back home, I settled down into an easy-going, lazy sort of life, and I don't suppose that I ever shall amount to anything," he added, with a sigh. "Such drones as I am should be pushed out of this busy bee-hive of life."

Katie smiled.

"This must be one of your blue days, Mar's Jack. And I should tell you what an altogether nice sort of a fellow I think a certain young gentleman of my acquaintance to be, if I did not know that he was well enough aware of that fact at most times. But, there," she added, jumping up and shaking out the dainty lace ruffles of her dress. "I have something for this 'drone' to busy himself about for an hour or so. Come, fulfil your promise, Mar's Jack, and take me to visit the 'old church' of which you told me."

Jack raised himself upon his elbow and looked at her in astonishment.

“Why, Katie,” he began, but a soft little hand was placed over his mouth.

“Now, I know what you are going to say: ‘It’s so dreadfully warm, the church is such an interminable distance, etc.’ But I am deaf to all excuses. When a woman will, she will, you may depend on’t; so do not argue, but obey.”)

“O, you little tyrant,” laughed Jack, drawing her towards him. “Well, tell me how much you think of me and I will follow wheresoe’er you lead.”

“I love you very dearly,” she said, softly, as Jack’s arm stole around her waist,—“at a distance,” she added, saucily, springing away from him and darting through the doorway.

She returned in a few moments with a large hat tied under her chin, Jack’s sunshade in one hand and a huge umbrella in the other

“Come, Mar’s Jack, I am ready.”

“Perhaps you would prefer me at a distance.”

“O, no! not in this case. You will be too useful,” she said, nonchalantly. “I want you to hold this umbrella over my head and carry this basket for ferns. But you know the old quotation, ‘’Tis distance lends enchantment to the view.’”

"It may be in some folks, certainly not in you," said Jack, poetically.

"Such poetry is not admissible," answered Katie, laughing; "the rhyme and the meter should both be completer. You may be a poet, but I do not know it, for you do not show it."

"Go it," added Jack, nodding his head approvingly.

"Quite enough nonsense, now, Mar's Jack. Come on and be good for once in your life. Let's go to church."

I am snre I do not know for what reason Mar's Jack and Miss Katie carried the huge umbrella. They walked westward with the sun shining full in their faces and held the umbrella behind their backs. It may have been carried for some other purpose than for protection, for every time Katie said or did any thing particularly interesting, the umbrella would be raised over the two heads, and when it was lowered again, Mar's Jack looked very pleased and Katie very blushing. But, of course, that is only a conjecture on my part.

"I am a very good pedestrian," said Katie, at last, "but after I have walked a mile or two, I become slightly weary."

Jack laughed.

"Sarcasm is not in order. Patience is a virtue, my dear little friend. There! look through the trees and behold the goal of your aspirations."

It was a picturesque spot to which Mar's Jack led his companion, and, looking about her, Katie felt well repaid for her long, hot walk in the sun. The church was a low stone structure, built in the form of a cross. It was situated at a little distance from the banks of a pretty winding stream, and was half hidden from view by the dense shade trees.

"O that I had the pencil of the artist," said Katie, earnestly, as she entered the grave-yard. "I new saw a prettier or more picturesque-looking place.

"Come, Mar's Jack, let us look at the names upon the head-stones," she added, lowering her voice as she paused at a little grave.

"KATIE MAY.—Aged 2 years, 6 months, 10 days.

"She is not dead but sleepeth."

"Such a little grave, Mar's Jack."

"Here is an old man's grave next the little one," and Jack stooped to look at the date. "Ninety years of age. A long life, Katie."

"Yes, and yet all life seems short."

“What is this passing scene,
A peevish April day,
A little sun, a little rain,
And then night sweeps along the plain,
And all things fade away.
Man soon discussed,
Yields up his trust,
And all his hopes and fears
Lie with him in the dust,”

quoted Katie, softly, looking about her.

Many of the grave-stones had fallen, others were covered with moss and clinging branches of ivy, and all the graves seemed neglected and forgotten.

“Do you know,” she added, after a pause, “I am always so happy, and life seems so bright and real to me, and yet I feel very strangely in a place like this. And I wonder, after all, if this world is not

‘Vain and volatile and fleet.’

Perhaps if this is only the shadow we shall find the substance beyond.”

Mar’s Jack placed his hand under her chin and raised the pretty face to his own.

“You are a confirmed little moralizer, I do believe,” he said, smiling tenderly down into the blue eyes.

“Katie,” he added, after a pause, pointing to a long, narrow grave, “Aunt Ruth lies buried here.”

Katie glanced at the white stone on which was engraven only the name "Ruth," and she instinctively looked down at the ring upon her finger. How strange it seemed that beneath this earth rested a form once full of life, and health, and hope. How often had Ruth Templeton looked down, blushing, upon this same little ring, the seal of her engagement.

"Another stanza from your poet, Katie.

"The most beloved of earth,
Not long survives to-day,
The music past is obsolete,
And yet 'twas sweet, 'twas passing sweet,
But now 'tis gone away.
Thus does the shade
In memory fade,
When in the forsaken tomb
The form beloved is laid,"

quoted Mar's Jack in a low, distinct voice. "Life hardly seems worth the living. Sooner or later we all come to this. But there," he added, quickly, turning away, "Your mood is infectious. I am growing pessimistical. We will not indulge in such gloomy reflections."

"Come, Katie," tucking her arm in his, "we will take a look inside the old church. Don't try to run ahead, however, for this place is reputed to have

ghostly visitors, and you might meet one of these nocturnal ramblers out for a day stroll."

"Dis heah's an awful lonesome place, ain't it?" was said close behind them.

"A voice from the tombs," cried Jack, solemnly, turning and confronting Caleb. "Well, Katie," he added, laughing, "I have heard of white ghosts before, but this is the first time I ever saw a black one. How in the name of common sense did you get here, Caleb?"

Caleb thrust his hands into his pockets, and looked up saucily.

"Reckon I done got two legs on me. I walk, heah, 'hin' you'n Miss Katie all de way."

"O, you did! Well, I reckon as you have two legs on you you can walk back again as quickly as you please."

Caleb began to whimper, his braggadocio air vanishing quickly.

"Please ter let me stay heah, Mar's Jack. I aint' gwine ter 'fere wid youse all 'kissin,' or nuffin."

Jack threw back his head and laughed merrily.

"Thank you. Well, ask Miss Katie if you can stay upon those conditions."

Caleb looked up into Katie's face.

“Miss Katie’s so pretty I know she’ll let me stay,” said the artful little imp.

Katie laughed and consented, and Caleb forthwith began to dance a jig with utter disregard of time and place.

“Well, let’s proceed,” and Jack unfastened the church door, which opened with a creaking sound.

All was dark and silent in the old church, so dark and so silent that even the tick, tick of the death-watch could be heard in the wall near them. Katie crept up to Mar’s Jack’s side, and even Caleb drew back with an awed feeling.

The declining sun, shining down through the darkened casement, shed a ghostly light through the old place; the very air was chilling. It seemed a fitting place for wandering restless spirits from another world. Caleb was the first to break the silence, and was soon darting in and out among the straight, high-backed pews.

There was a large sounding-board over the pulpit and three reading-desks, one above the other. Opposite the desks, upon a stone tablet beneath the choir, were engraven the names of the first pastor and the vestry men. Jack pointed out the old parson’s burial-place under the chancel.

“How strange it seems,” said Katie, seating

herself in one of the pews where she was almost hidden from view.

"I wisht we had sech high pews inside de Baptist' Church, whar my mammy takes me sometimes, den I could play, an' sleep, an' hab lots o' fun, an' nobody wouldn't know nuffin bouten it," and Caleb examined the pew with much interest, seemingly much impressed with the advantages possessed by high-backed pews over modern ones.

"Come over in the north end of the church, Katie," said Jack, leading the way. "I will show you the scene of a tragedy. Do you see this dark stain in the corner? Murder was committed here one dark night, so they say."

"O dear me," cried Katie, shuddering and glancing over her shoulder, "When was it?"

"O, long ago. There were cries of help one dark night, so the story goes, that could be heard for miles around, but no trace was ever found of murderer or victim save this stain upon the floor and the portion of a sleeve, as if torn away in the death-struggle."

Katie put her hands over her ears.

"Do hush, Mar's Jack ; you make my hair stand on end telling me such stories in such a place. Can't you recall a more cheerful anecdote?"

"I always do things by extremes, so come over to the south end and I will show you another place of interest. You know, even back in the revolutionary times this old church was standing, and it was a famous hiding-place for the soldiers. Well, the story goes that a certain continental soldier was hidden away in this old church, and the red coats had a suspicion of it; so they crept up very cautiously one eve in order to surprise him, but his lady-love, who had taken care of him, slipped around here by a shorter route and whistled in the window, this one, a tune they had agreed upon in case of danger. Her lover took the hint and put out, so when the Red Coats came up their bird had flown."

Katie examined the window with much interest.

"I suppose she used to talk to him through this window, and hand him his food and—"

"Kiss 'im," put in Caleb.

"Now I never will have any chance to do anything like that for you, will I, Mar's Jack?"

Jack's eyes twinkled.

"Kiss me, O yes, indeed," he said, wickedly, misconstruing her meaning.

Katie gave him a withering glance.

"Pooh! You know I didn't mean that. But

everything is so practical now-a-days. Nothing romantic like this ever happens."

Jack twirled the corners of his mustache (a favorite habit of his).

"Well, that sounds very romantic you know, but then it wouldn't be very cheerful to hide around here all day with the rats and mice, and lie down at night while the ghosts were having prayer-meeting. No, I thank you. I choose to be practical rather than romantic; it is more comfortable.

"But changing the subject, Katie, mother was married in this old church; I was baptized here; father was buried from it; and the first wedding I ever saw was in this old building. I remember thinking it very like a funeral, for the lady was dressed all in black, and the groom was in the last stages of consumption. I determined then never to get married. You can see how well I keep my resolutions," looking at her roguishly.

"Who was married and what made her dress in black? Such a queer wedding, Mar's Jack. What did she marry that man for?"

Jack laughed.

"You are a true Yankee. You can not hide where you came from."

Katie tossed her head.

"And I have no desire to do so. I am very proud of my birth-place."

Jack laughed again.

"Good! You will be able to stand your ground in this world.

"But now for your questions.

"Firstly, Who was married? My aunt.

"Secondly, I went because, not being of age at that time I could not help myself.

"Thirdly, I can not answer, that being her own private affair. Can I be of service further?"

"Yes, sir—Please try and be sensible."

Jack bowed.

"It will be hard work, but I'll do my best.

"But come, mademoiselle, it is growing late. And if we do not hurry we shall have more company than we desire. I am not fond of these ghostly ramblers, myself, so let us away to less romantic, but more cheerful quarters."

They were startled by the sound of horses' hoofs as they left the graveyard, and two horsemen came dashing down the road.

"Jack Templeton, as I'm alive," cried one, as they reined in their steeds.

"Helloa, Fairfax," said Jack, coming forward.

His face changed expression, slightly as he saw Wilton's companion.

"My friend, Mr. Ashely, Miss Lee. I believe you have met Fairfax; the reprobate," laughed Wilton.

Katie smiled and held out her hand to Wilton, after recognizing his companion, who, she determined at a glance, was very handsome. Ashely? Where had she heard the name before?

"You have chosen a cheerful place for a ramble," laughed Wilton. "Thinking of entering the ministry, Templeton?"

"If I do I will set about trying to effect your reformation the first thing. You need it about as badly as any one I know of."

"There, I did not mean to call down your righteous indignation upon my poor head. But can you not find a more cheerful place for a stroll? Picturesque though, isn't it, Ashely?"

"Very," answered his companion, looking about him with an artist's eye, "I must come around this way with my pencil."

"Yes, come and paint up some ghosts," answered Wilton, jokingly, "they say there are plenty of them about here."

"Mar's Jack nebber intrerduced me ter de comp'ny," grinned Caleb, who was irreverently sitting astride a tombstone, and whittling away at a stick.

"O, I beg your pardon," said Jack, after the laugh that followed, had somewhat subsided. "Gentlemen this is an abnormal ghost, discovered by Miss Lee and myself this afternoon. Something out of the usual order, black, you see. Answers to the name of Caleb—offered for sale cheap."

Ashely and Fairfax lifted their hats, and the latter said laughingly,

"Aunt Dinah was looking for a certain black ghost a while ago. I think she had a little gymnastic exercise in store for him in the shape of a leather strap. By the by, Templeton," he added turning to Jack, "We have just returned from Woodburn. Left something for Miss Lee and yourself. Belle has followed in the footsteps of her forefathers or foremothers rather."

Katie's eyes opened wide.

"Has Belle run away?"

Wilton laughed.

"No, she has not absconded as yet. But she so intends. In other words she is going to be married."

"Oh!" said Katie in a relieved tone.

"May I ask to whom, Mr. Fairfax?"

“Hal Fitzhugh.

“Change the name and not the letter, change for worse and not for better, we tell her. But she says she’ll risk it. Rash girl isn’t she?”

“Very,” answered Jack solemnly, “Well gentlemen,” he added, assuming a despairing attitude, “It is like tearing my heart strings to leave you, but I feel it my bounden duty to break up this pleasant little party, as I have no desire to be rambling about this place after dark.”

“My respects to your sisters, Fairfax,” he called after them, as the gentlemen rode away.

“How quiet Mr. Ashely was,” said Katie as they turned into the road, “Is he a friend of yours, Mar’s Jack?”

Again Katie saw the expression of annoyance come into Jack’s face.

“O, I know him slightly. He is an artist I believe, from the North some where. Visits at Bellevue quite often. I never fancied him particularly. Old prejudices, most likely.

“But look, Katie,” he added, as if glad to change the subject. “Here comes Miss Tessy.”

And sure enough, Miss Tessy, donkey, cart and all, came jogging down the road.

“Observe this beautiful vehicle closely, Katie,

you may want the pattern," said Jack, in an undertone as Miss Tessy, smiling and bobbing her head energetically, drove up to them.

"Superb, isn't it? Like Miss Tessy, a relic of antiquity."

"Jack, do be still; she will see us laughing."

"Fine day," put in Miss Tessy.

"Very," answered Jack, aloud. "Look at the artistic arrangements of the interior, Katie," lowering his voice.

But Katie gave him a reproving glance, although she fully agreed with Mar's Jack that the donkey-cart presented a very peculiar appearance. Why it was designated as a cart I do not know; probably for convenience sake; as, judging from its appearance, any name might be given it with impunity. The lower portion was of rough pine boards, painted, originally, brown, while a dilapidated leather top shaded Miss Tessy from the too ardent rays of the sun in Summer, and proved some slight protection from the winds in cold weather. The seat was broad and low, and was covered with green baize, while faded green curtains flapped at the sides, seeming to vie with Miss Tessy's curls in coquetting with the breeze.

"Well, what's the news?" asked that lady, after

a pause. "Whoa, Billy!" she added to the donkey, who always found it necessary to walk on if Miss Tessy desired to stop.

"O, nothing in particular, Miss Tessy, I believe," answered Jack, placing his hand on Billy's rein to check him in his "mad career."

"Belle Fairfax's wedding, Mar's Jack," said Katie.

Jack nudged her, but it was too late.

"La, me! Is Belle Fairfax going to get married! I must fix up my green silk. Dear, dear me! Who is the other one?" smiling coquettishly, and giving Mar's Jack a poke with her sun-shade, "the man you know. Who is he?"

"O, what a 'slip of the tongue!' Kit. The girls never invite Miss Tessy to anything," whispered Jack; "they will scold you unmercifully. Miss Fairfax is going to marry Hal Fitzhugh," he added, aloud.

Miss Tessy tucked her head upon one side.

"Now you don't tell me. Well! well! His father was an—an old beau of mine," she said, laughing coyly; "but don't mention it, please."

"O, not for the world!" declared Jack, solemnly. "Your confidence is sacred to me, Miss Tessy. There is not a man in old 'Virginny' who

wasn't a beau of Miss Tessy's at some time or other, according to her account," he added, in an undertone to Katie.

"Well, now," continued Miss Tessy, "that does seem good to hear of a wedding once more. I must go up to Bellevue. But, dear me, how late it is growing. I will have to hurry on. I hope you have been good to-day," handing them each a tract.

"O, certainly. I have just returned with my friends here from church," answered Jack, bestowing a sly wink upon Katie.

"That's right, that's right," she nodded, approvingly. "Get up, Billy! I never saw such a donkey as this," she added, despairingly, as Billy gave not the slightest heed. "Get up, Billy!"

All Miss Tessy's commands were fruitless, however, and at last Jack, taking matters into his own hands, slyly thrust a pin into Billy's side, at which the little fellow threw up his hind legs and actually, for once in his life, *dashed* away, frightening Miss Tessy nearly out of her wits.

CHAPTER VIII.

"It is the little rifts within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute."

A WEDDING in old Virginia before the war was a very important event, not only to the contracting parties but also to the invited guests, for the festivities were usually prolonged for ten or twelve days—music, dancing—in fact, every kind of amusement conceivable was indulged in, so much enjoyment was anticipated, and great was the excitement which prevailed among the young people over Belle Fairfax's wedding. Katie was to be one of the ten bride's-maids, and her whole time was occupied for the next week or so in trying on and fitting various articles of feminine apparel until Jack declared that she would be ruffled, hemmed, flounced out of all existence. Great was the confusion at Woodburn. Various expeditions were made into town, and Jack appeared with numerous parcels at all hours of the day.

Even Caleb took part in the general preparations. For after he had teased Mar's Jack incessantly, and

all to no purpose, to let him go up to "de weddin'" (a request he would never have dared to make if Aunt Dinah had not been going), Katie had taken matters into her own hands and had arranged with Belle Fairfax, who entered readily into the joke, that Caleb should go.

So Mar's Jack was silenced when Caleb received an invitation directed to Master Caleb Templeton, and Cabe's delight knew no bounds.

He washed his little feet every day, for two weeks, in order to have them in wedding trim; and his cup of happiness was full to overflowing when Katie sent to town for a pair of red-topped boots, and Mrs. Templeton made him a very neat little suit out of one of Jack's old ones.

"I's gwine ter be quite a gen'leman, ain't I mammy?" he queried delightedly, as he sat washing his feet, preparatory to trying on the new boots.

"Scrub dem hoofs clean, an' keep yo' mouf shut," was all the answer Aunt Dinah condescended to give.

"I guess dese heah las' few weeks am de fus' time I eber had my foots washed in my life, ain't it, mammy?"

Aunt Dinah looked up with a very injured air.

"'Deed, an' it ain't, den, chile. W'en you's a

baby, I usen ter wash you once or twict ebery monf. 'Deed, you 's bery clean w'en I tuken charge ob you. You 's so big now I can't tend ter you."

Caleb sat very silent a few moments, and then he looked up with a bright expression in his little face.

"Does you reckon, mammy, ef I scrubbed bery hard fur a long, long time, dat I could maken me white, liken Mar's Jack an' Miss Katie?"

"No, chile," said Aunt Dinah, shaking her head slowly. "God made you dat a-way, an' no amount o' scrubbin' 'ill help it. Ef you 's bery good do', you'll be white up in Hebben, sho's you 's born."

"Dat 's awful po' comfut," said the little fellow, disconsolately, "'kase you all 's allus tellin' me how bad I is, an' I nebber 'spec's ter gitten up ter Hebben."

Aunt Dinah's heart was touched.

"'Deed, chile, I reckon you 's got 'bout as good a chance ob gittin' dar as any ob us. We 's all sinful cre'turs. But hurry up an' try on dem boots! I's bery anxious ter see how dey 's gwine ter look on you."

And very proud she was of her boy when, a few days afterward, he sat mounted upon the carriage beside Pompey, the red-topped boots gleaming

brightly in the sun. Aunt Dinah herself (who, being far-famed as a cook, was to attend to the cake-making for the coming festivities) was gayly attired in a heavy red woolen shawl. She possessed two articles which were her heart's delight, and without the one or the other of these, she never appeared in public, viz., the aforementioned shawl and a huge palm-leaf fan. To Katie's query :

"Aunty, why in the world did you wear that shawl? You will positively melt before we reach Bellevue,"

She answered, as if astonished at such a question,

"La, honey, I couldn't fin' my fan. I allus takes one or de odder w'en I goes callin' on de qual'ty."

The ride to Bellevue was accomplished without incident, and they were heartily welcomed upon their arrival.

"I am ever so glad you have come," said Jessie Fairfax, kissing first Mrs. Templeton and then Katie very warmly, at which Mar's Jack slyly asked her if she intended to favor the company.

"Oh, certainly," she answered roguishly, putting up her red lips, but jumping away just in time to elude him.

"Never mind ; Miss Jessie, I'll have that kiss yet," he said, shaking his finger at her.

"If you can get it," she answered, laughingly, and leading the way into the house. "Come right up stairs, Katie. Mamma will attend to the rest of the party. You will have to put up with ever so many inconveniences, for the house is just full. Fifty arrivals this week, and more expected. Of course they won't all of them stay as long as the younger set will; but of course we will be terribly crowded for a week or two. Do you mind sleeping four in a bed?"

"No, indeed," laughed Katie; "I am ready for any amount of fun."

"Well, here is the beginning of it," said Jessie, ushering her into a whole roomful of merry girls, seated about the room in various postures, more comfortable than graceful perhaps, and chattering together like magpies.

"My friend, Miss Lee, girls," said Jessie, by way of introduction.

After the usual greetings, a place was made for Katie upon one corner of the bed, and the chattering, interrupted by their entrance, was resumed with renewed vigor.

"I think Belle's trousseau is just lovely; don't you?"

"Came from New York, didn't it, Jessie?"

“That is just a love of a white bonnet—ever so much prettier than Daisy Mossgrove’s?”

“Are the Ellertons coming?”

“Yes, Phil’s home from the Academy on a furlough. Looks just splendid in his new uniform.”

“Look sharp, Cad or you will be in danger of losing your cavalier,” chimed in Lucy Burton, with a glance at Cad Nelson, a pretty girl, with bright hazel eyes, and an abundance of long golden hair.

“Is our artist here, Jessie?” asked Cad not deigning to reply to Lucy’s impertinence.

“O, yes, he has been here some time—”

“Say girls, Kit Perkins said he took her hand and arm as a model in his painting of ‘Cleopatra.’ Do you believe it?”

“No—she tells dreadful fibs,” said Cad Nelson, contemptuously.

“Well, she has a lovely arm,” put in one of the others, charitably.

“I am surprised he did not request my arm as a model,” said Lucy Burton, mischievously, displaying her thin arm, much to the merriment of the others, for Lucy’s nick-name among the girls was “Bones,” a name much more expressive than elegant.

“Or my nose, as being something celestially

inclined, " said Cad Nelson, rubbing that much abused pug.

Just at this juncture the announcement that supper would be ready in five minutes, caused a great commotion, as there was much dressing and "primping" to be done, 'ere they could make a presentable appearance.

Very pretty Katie looked in the lavender muslin, with pansies at her throat and in her hair, "the observed of all observers," even among so many acknowledged beauties. She laughed and chatted, talked and sang, and indeed was quite the belle of the evening. But she grew wearied at last, and slipping away from her numerous attendants, sought a quiet place out on the veranda.

To tell the truth, she was slightly piqued at Mar's Jack, which was exactly the state of mind that gentleman had been desirous of producing in his fair little *fiancée*; for Katie had been flirting shamefully all the evening, seeming to have forgotten Mar's Jack's very existence.

So that gentleman, after standing about rather glumly for an hour or so, finally devoted himself quite assiduously to Jessie Fairfax by way of revenge.

Katie felt piqued; utterly ignoring her own

shortcomings, and she determined, as she stood idly tapping her little slipper against the step, to return in a very short time, and make new conquests.

"You seem to prefer solitude, Miss Lee," and looking up she recognized the handsome face of the young artist.

Here was an opportunity for revenge upon Mar's Jack.

"O no!" she answered quickly. "On the contrary, I much prefer pleasant company. Will you have a seat?"

"Thank you. A very pretty compliment, and paid in a very graceful manner," he answered; seating himself beside her. "I was rather surprised at finding you alone, seeing you so surrounded by admirers but a short time ago."

"I was slightly weary. One becomes tired of so many people, and of so much excitement and often prefers to be alone," she said, absently, forgetting the empty compliment she had paid him but a moment since.

He smiled slightly at her inconsistency, but otherwise took no notice of her remark.

"So you don't enjoy tripping the light fantastic toe, Miss Lee?"

"O, indeed I do. I would rather dance than do

anything else in the world," she said enthusiastically.

"There is my favorite waltz. May I ask you to dance with me in the library. We can have the room all to ourselves."

"Certainly, Mr. Ashely. I could dance all night," she said, jumping up from the steps.

"Miss Lee," looking down into the blue eyes, as they stood under the archway in the library. "You are inconsistent to-night. You say at one moment that you are very weary, and at the next that you could dance all night. Pardon me, but the two statements are slightly opposed to one another."

"I am always inconsistent, as you will find upon better acquaintance," she answered, with a little nervous laugh; and the next moment they were whirling away with many a "winding bout." Around and around the room they flew, Katie's feet scarce touching the floor, so lightly did she move.

"That was Heaven, Miss Katie. May I have another?" he asked, after they had rested a moment.

"Your ideas of Heaven are exalted," she answered, laughingly. "Certainly," in answer to his question, for her partner was a good waltzer, and

she enjoyed it fully as much as did he. Even after the music ceased did they dance until Katie, exhausted, sank into a chair, with cheeks glowing and eyes shining with excitement, while Ashely leaned over her chair, fanning her gently. She seemed under the influence of some spell to-night. It was a handsome face that bent over her. The eyes were dark and expressive, and the voice was low and musical. Mar's Jack, for the first time, seemed forgotten.

"Miss Katie," said Ashely, suddenly breaking off in the midst of a story he was relating, "I would give anything I possess to be able to sketch your face as you look at present. "Pardon me," he added, checking himself; "but remember that I am an artist with an artist's appreciation of the beautiful."

Katie's lashes drooped with a pretty show of confusion, but she recovered herself instantly.

"O, an artist can perceive a trace of the beautiful in almost everything," she said, laughingly.

"But in this case," began Ashely, but interrupted himself abruptly, "there, I dislike flattery. I don't pretend to be a Raphael, Miss Lee," with a smile. "In fact, I am not an artist by profession, merely sketching during my leisure hours.

But," turning to her, "you have not answered my question."

"I think," she began, hesitatingly, "that you—"

"I seed youse two dancin' 'bout dis room, an' I'se gwine ter tell Mar's Jack how youse 'havin'," interrupted a voice at the window, at which they both started and looked up, but no one was to be seen.

"Spirits," laughed Ashely; but Katie felt uneasy. Perhaps she had not acted discreetly.

"We had better go into the drawing-room," she said, quickly.

"Just as you wish," offering her his arm and leading the way to the drawing-room, where the guests were separating for the night.

"O, Katie, what shall I do? I am in a dreadful dilemma," exclaimed Jessie Fairfax, despairingly, as they were going up-stairs that evening.

"Why, what's the matter? Have the skies fallen?" questioned Katie, playfully, amused at Jessie's woe-begone countenance.

"No, worse than that; Miss Tessy, donkey, cart and all, have dropped down upon us in full force. Now I know where to put one donkey (there I musn't be disrespectful), but Miss Tessy, I am sure, can not be provided for. Sleeping apartments are so in demand at present that we can not afford

to give her one all to herself, and none of the girls will room with her. I wonder how she found out about the wedding."

Katie's face assumed a penitent expression.

"I am afraid I will have to plead guilty to giving her the information. I will do penance, however, by rooming with her. Will that do?"

"You dear, sweet, lovely girl, I knew you would help me out," cried Jessie, hugging her energetically. "I will give you my room and make you as comfortable as possible. I have to curl up on a lounge in mamma's room myself."

An hour later Katie sat on the bed in a loose, white wrapper, with the wavy dark hair falling over her shoulders, watching Miss Tessy unpack the numerous satchels and band-boxes around her.

"This is my trousseau, dear," laughed Miss Tessy, coyly. "Indeed, I did have my wedding clothes all made up once," she added, confidentially, "and the wedding night the young man ran off with another girl. I would not have cared so much, for he was a very poky, uninteresting young man, but my clothes were all marked with his name, and of course were of no use to me. I made the best of matters, however," she added, laughing at her own

shrewdness, "and sold them to the girl he married ; so you see I did not lose much after all."

"Don't you think this is beautiful," she asked, after a pause, displaying a brilliant green silk covered with black dots ?

"It is of very fine texture, is it not?" queried Katie, evasively.

"Yes, indeed. I never wear anything but nice clothes—old-fashioned, my dear, but very, very nice. You see, I have to be economical now," with a little sigh. "Things are not as they were when I was young and pretty. Here is my picture," she added, diving down into the satchel and bringing up an old-fashioned miniature, which she handed to Katie.

The face was a very pretty, winning one, and as Katie looked first at it and then at Miss Tessy's wizened countenance, striving to trace some resemblance between them, she involuntarily glanced at her own lovely face in the mirror opposite, and wondered if time would work as great a change in her.

Miss Tessy was not very old. She could not have been over forty-nine or fifty at the most, despite Jack's declaration that she was antediluvian. But her face was one of those which looks old before its time—thin and small-featured, and the nose

and chin seemed to have a great affinity for each other.

Miss Tessy noticed Katie's look, and interpreted its meaning.

"Not much like me now, dear, is it?" with a slight touch of sadness in her voice. "Well, they laugh at me, and think me a queer little woman; but I was not always uncared for. I was once as young and as pretty as you are, my dear," she added with a sigh. "We must all grow old, my dear."

Katie's heart was touched. She had always felt inclined to laugh at Miss Tessy; but even this queer, eccentric little body wanted to be loved and cared for. She threw her arms about Miss Tessy's neck, in her sweet, impulsive way.

"Won't you let me love you?" she asked, kissing the wrinkled cheek.

Miss Tessy kissed the red lips in return, and they sat silent a few moments, Katie's soft cheek pressed against the wrinkled one. Then Miss Tessy said gently:

"I am very selfish, dear, to keep you up so late. You must go to bed."

Miss Tessy's preparations for retiring were very extensive. She always slept, surrounded by pillows, and held a palm-leaf fan in one hand, and a little

satchel containing her handkerchief, smelling salts and prayer-book, in the other.

When Katie was curled up in bed, Miss Tessy sat down by the table :

“ I always read one of Saurin’s sermons every night. Shall I read out loud, dear ? ”

“ Yes ’m,” answered Katie, suppressing a sigh. And Miss Tessy forthwith began to read ; but before she was half-way down the page, Katie was fast asleep.

CHAPTER IX.

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practice to deceive."

A WHOLE week of gayety passed away, and the wedding day dawned bright and clear. The whole party were to drive over to the old church, where the ceremony was to take place, after which came the wedding dinner at Bellevue, and to crown all, the grand reception in the evening. Mrs. Fairfax had sent a small organ over to the church, and the old building had been prettily decorated with flowers. Very lovely the bride and bride's-maids looked, all in pure white, and among the loveliest was our Katie, in her white tulle, with tea-roses resting against the dark shining hair.

" 'I never saw a fairer, I never lo'ed a dearer,' " whispered Mar's Jack, forgiving all of her shortcomings of the past week, as he handed her into the carriage.

Miss Tessy was there, resplendent in the green silk, with the black dots, while a lace shawl was arranged artistically over the cork-screw curls, and she carried a crimson plush fan in her hand.

The donkey was there also ; but Miss Tessy did not intend to drive him on this bright morning, if she could help it.

“Girls,” she said in her blindest tones, looking into the carriage in which Katie was sitting, “wouldn’t one of you like to change places with me? Billy is mighty gentle, and then you would not be so apt to crush your dresses in there alone as you will, crowded in this carriage. Indeed, I think one of you would enjoy driving Billy, wouldn’t you?” and Miss Tessy looked pleadingly into the four bright faces. But the girls exchanged glances, and did not seem inclined to answer.

“How can you resist such an offer?” put in Lucy Burton, in an undertone. “Just think! she will trust one of us to drive the charming Billy, whose speed is so great that you will probably arrive at the church about the time the Bishop is pronouncing ‘Fitzie’ and Belle, man and wife. ’Tis a golden opportunity, ‘one that may never return.’ Girls, let me beseech you not to let it slip from your grasp.”

Lucy’s speech was greeted with a burst of laughter.

“What are you laughing at, girls?” asked Miss Tessy, anxiously.

Lucy put her mouth close to Miss Tessy's ear.

"O, don't mind these girls, they are very silly; giggle at everything. I was merely enumerating Billy's good qualities, and they laughed. Very foolish, are they not?"

Miss Tessy nodded, incredulously, and the girls laughed louder than ever.

"Then, girls," continued Lucy, in the same undertone, "you will find the knitting and the tracts under the seat. Three things at a time—physical exercise, mental exercise, and a pleasant ride in the bargain, with a donkey for a companion. Once more I make the offer. Who will close in with it?"

The girls were all laughing behind their fans, but Katie checked herself immediately as she saw the anxious puzzled expression of Miss Tessy's face.

"I'll drive Billy," she said, with a smile, jumping out of the carriage and helping Miss Tessy into her place.

"Thank you, dear," said Miss Tessy, nodding her head to Katie. "I think she will enjoy driving Billy," she added, apologetically, to the girls.

"I do not doubt it," answered Cad Nelson, ironically. "Be careful that Billy does not run

away with you," she called after Katie, as the door was shut and the carriage rolled away.

"Have they left you alone, Miss Katie?" asked Ashely in a surprised tone, coming up and lifting his hat.

"O, no," she answered, forgetting to ask why he remained. "I intend to drive Billy the Wonderful."

Ashely laughed

"An illustration of Beauty and the Beast. I intended to ride over on horseback, but if you will permit me, Miss Katie, I will take care of you."

"Certainly, if you will promise to drive carefully. Billy is so excitable," she said, smiling and blushing, prettily, as she jumped into the donkey-cart.

Billy seemed to understand that his reputation was at stake, for, despite the predictions to the contrary, he brought Ashely and his companion to the old church in ample time.

The ceremony was very beautiful and impressive, and, at its conclusion, after the many congratulations and well wishes for the future, the bridal party started homeward. But a sudden thunder shower put a damper upon the spirits of the merry party,

and from its vehemence seemed likely to wash them away altogether.

"We will have to turn back, Miss Lee," said Ashely, turning Billy around. "This cart is very poor protection, and you will get wringing wet. There is no alternative but to take refuge in the church until after the storm, which probably will not last long," and so saying, he drove back to the church, in which they sought shelter, after fastening Billy outside.

"What a dreary old place this is! I wonder that Miss Fairfax should choose such a place for her marriage," said Ashely, arranging a seat for Katie in one of the pews.

"Jessie told me it was an old custom and Belle would not be the first to break from it. I should feel as though I were going to my own funeral," answered Katie, looking about her. "O dear!" as flash of lightning nearly blinded her. "Hush! What was that?" she added, turning pale. "Didn't you hear a noise?"

"Yes, quite a noise that thunder clap gave us," laughed Ashely. "Are you afraid of a storm, Miss Lee?"

"No," hesitatingly; "that is, not anywhere

else. But it is so dreary here. There! I was sure I heard a step," rising up, nervously.

"Don't be frightened, Miss Katie," he said, gently, coming up close to her side.

It was dark, very dark in the old church now. Katie could scarcely distinguish the features of her companion, but she knew that he was near her and her heart beat quickly as he took her trembling little hands in both his own. Perhaps at another time and in another place she would have been angry, but she felt frightened in this dark old church with the storm raging without and a rustling within as of the tread of unseen spirits. And it was a comfort to know that a strong arm was near, ready to protect.

At every flash of the lightning she could see that he was bending towards her, with his eyes fixed upon her face. She longed to break the spell, but dared not. At last the rain ceased; the muttering of the thunder grew fainter and fainter, and the storm died away, spent with its own fury.

"Don't you think we had better start back again?" asked Katie, softly, at last.

Ashely drew a long breath and released the pretty hands, but he said nothing as he led the way out of the church.

“Do look at Billy,” laughed Katie, merrily, glad of any excuse to speak. “I never saw anything look so forlorn.”

And poor Billy was certainly a very disconsolate looking donkey, with the rain dripping off his back and his ears drooping mournfully. He brightened up, however, as Ashely and Katie appeared and fully established the good opinion they had entertained of his traveling powers (perhaps he had the wedding dinner in view) by the way in which he trotted towards Bellevue.

It may be that the old church was not haunted, some wise folks laughed the idea to scorn, but certain it is, that a mysterious figure slipped out of the church door, some time after Ashely and Miss Lee had taken their departure, and trotted at some distance behind them, with a red topped boot in either hand, for the roads were muddy; and certain it is that this figure did not halt until they reached Bellevue, when it disappeared as mysteriously as it had made its appearance.

Our fugitives had not been missed in the general confusion, save by Mar's Jack, and so escaped comment.

“Where have you been, Katie? I have been looking everywhere for you,” said Jack offering her

his arm, as the guests passed into the dining hall.

"I was delayed a little by the storm," she answered evasively, but Mar's Jack trusted her so entirely that he was satisfied.

"There has been a new arrival Katie," said Jack as they seated themselves at the table, "and you are going to see a phenomenon. But don't laugh for anything or you may hurt somebody's feelings, for Old Peter Brown is blessed with an abundance of relatives, as well as an abundance of nose. You may see a nose, several minutes before old Peter makes his appearance, but let me warn you to keep a straight face, upon peril of your life."

Despite the old proverb, "forewarned is forearmed," Katie could scarcely repress an exclamation as the burly form of the Honorable Peter Brown entered the hall. She scarcely noticed the heavy figure, the rolling walk and the homely but good-natured face.

No—the nose absorbed her whole attention. It was one of those large sympathetic noses, that seemed to blend with and overshadow every other feature of his face.

Nature as if in recompense for his many defects,

had bestowed this feature upon him with a lavish hand.

So far from being sensitive over his lack of beauty, Old Peter Brown, like the great Mirabeau, gloried in his own ugliness.

Nevertheless, he was a great admirer of beauty and after dinner collected quite a bevy of pretty girls about him. He was an interesting talker and that corner, soon became a very lively one.

"Please tell Katie the rusty knife story, Mr. Brown," coaxed Jessie Fairfax, who was sitting on a stool at his feet.

Old Peter laughed, and looked at Katie.

"You think that I am very handsome, don't you, my pretty one?" he asked, patting her cheek.

"I haven't exactly, formed my opinion yet," she answered demurely, at which he burst into a roar of laughter.

"Well, let me tell you the opinion other people have," he said, drawing a rusty knife from his pocket. "This is an old story, but a true one, and it is my story. I don't care who else claims it," he added, as though he expected some one else to dispute his right to being its hero.

"Once upon a time,' as the fairy tales go, I was riding along on horseback, musing so intently

that another solitary equestrian came almost upon me before I discovered him. He stared at me rather fixedly, but I am used to admiration, so took very little notice of him and rode on. Pretty soon he called after me, 'Say stranger,' and I reined in my horse and looked back.

"'Well—what's wanting?' I asked, as he rode up by my side.

"'Say, stranger, I reckon I have something that ought to be your'n by rights. Yes,' he added, looking me full in the face, 'I am sure it belongs to you.' •

"'To me, sir?' I asked, in astonishment.

"'Yes, stranger—to you,' he said, nodding his head emphatically, 'You see I was up to a fair at the creek an' I received this here as a prize fur bein' the ugliest man in the state,' he added, drawing this rusty knife from his pocket, 'an' I was ter keep it till I found a man uglier'n myself. This here knife belongs to you, stranger,' and he laid it in my hand and rode away.

"So you see how handsome they think me," concluded old Peter, laughing louder than any of the company.

"The rusty knife story, I am sure," said Mrs. Fairfax, coming towards them, "I do not like to

put an end to so much enjoyment, but the gentlemen are calling for Mr. Brown in the smoking room, and I want the young ladies to assist me in decorating the drawing room, with some flowers, that have just arrived. Will you, girls?"

"Yes, indeed," they cried eagerly, following her into the drawing-room, from which the other guests had been excluded.

Twelve pairs of hands and twelve chattering tongues were busy for the next hour, and at its close twelve pairs of bright eyes surveyed the work accomplished, critically.

"Perfectly lovely," was the unanimous verdict. Walls, paintings and arches were beautifully decorated with trailing vines and flowers. An archway of flowers extended across the center of the room, and just under it the mischievous girls hung a couplet in red and white flowers:

;

"Who stands under this,
Forfeits a kiss."

And many were the kisses forfeited by the fair damsels during the course of the evening, as they passed under the archway in dancing. Indeed, those who escaped were quite in the minority. Even Miss Tessy, who, being very near-sighted, put on her

glasses to look at the couplet, received a sounding kiss from old Peter Brown, which proceeding was greeted with a burst of applause.

And sly Mar's Jack induced unsuspecting Jessie Fairfax to promenade with him, leading her by a circuitous route under the archway, where he obtained the kiss of which she had cheated him the day of his arrival.

Many were the attempts made to obtain a kiss from Katie's pretty lips, but all to no purpose. Phil Ellerton had tried to waltz with her under the archway, but she whirled off in another direction. Wilton Fairfax and Tom Burton hovered near, all the evening, dancing and promenading in vain attempts to lure her to the fatal spot. She stood, chatting and laughing, dispensing her bright smiles upon the group of admirers who surrounded her as moths fluttering about the candle-light, but the wary little coquette was not to be conquered, and her kisses were still her own.

"Miss Lee is the only one in the room who has not had a kiss," said Wilton Fairfax to Ashely, who came up at that moment. "I think we should devise some means to obtain one. What do you say, gentlemen, to carrying her by main force under

the archway, and making her kiss every one in the room, as a penalty ? ”

“ Oh, you dreadful boy,” answered Katie, hurriedly, “ that would not be fair one bit, would it, Mr. Burton ? I appeal to you for protection.”

Tom shook his head.

“ I am afraid it would, Miss Katie. You don’t give a fellow half a chance.”

Katie looked up with an air of mock reproach.

“ ‘ And thou, too, Brutus ? ’ You gentlemen are very ungallant. I will try once again. I challenge Mr. Fairfax to mortal combat,” she said laughingly, throwing down her glove. “ Who will be my champion ? ”

“ I will, Miss Katie ; ” and Ashely stooped to pick up the little glove which he placed in his pocket.

“ Agreed,” she said, smiling brightly, and reaching out her hand toward him.

“ This is my waltz, I believe, Katie,” interrupted Mar’s Jack, rather glumly, offering her his arm.

“ You will become weary enough, by and by, of the silly speeches those fellows are always making,” he said petulantly, as they were waltzing. “ I don’t see why you like them, I am sure.”

"I was not aware that I had said anything about it," she answered coolly.

"Oh, well! you do like it, and you know it; but I do not."

"*You* do not?" with a decided emphasis on the *You*.

"No, I do not. Have I nothing to say about it, Katie? No sensible girl likes flattery."

"Thank you," she answered, with a curl of the lip. "Let's stop waltzing, please," she added coldly a few moments afterward, "I am tired;" and Mar's Jack led her to a seat, where she was soon surrounded by the whole group of flatterers he had been condemning so harshly.

This was their first quarrel. Would it be the last?

That night, after the bridal party had departed for a trip to the far North, Katie stood in her room before the mirror. She glanced down at her chain, on which she had fastened the little pearl ring before putting on her gloves that evening. The ring was gone. Was this a bad omen? Katie's heart was heavy.

"It must be in the drawing-room," she thought. "I will run down and look. Miss Tessy," she added

aloud, "I will be back in a moment or two," and she hurried down stairs.

Some few of the guests were out on the veranda, but the drawing-room was entirely deserted.

"What have you lost, Miss Katie?"

"Oh, how you startled me, Mr. Ashely! I thought it was—I mean—well, I have lost a little ring I wear sometimes," she said, speaking rather incoherently.

"May I help you search for it?"

"Thank you. I think I can find it alone—that is, you need not trouble yourself."

"Oh, no trouble at all, Miss Lee. What kind of a ring is it?"

"A pearl one; I wish I could find it." Katie felt nervous. Suppose Mar's Jack should come and find her here. He would surely say that it was her fault—that she had met Ashely by appointment.

"What is that shining in the corner?" Ashely stooped and picked up something. "Is this your ring, Miss Lee?"

"O, I am so glad you have found it,"—holding out her hand.

They were standing under the archway now.

"May I wish it upon your finger, Miss Lee?"

and he slipped it upon the finger she held out to him, regarding her intently for a few moments.

"I sincerely hope this may prove a true wish," he said in a low tone.

She raised the pretty face.

"Anything so very serious?" she queried, saucily.

"Very — to me," then he suddenly caught her face in his hands, and pressed a kiss upon her lips.

"What do you mean Mr. Ashely?" she cried, angrily, drawing back from him.

"The archway, Miss Katie," he answered, laughing; but she turned from him abruptly, and with a beating heart and a flushed face, left the room.

CHAPTER X.

"Trifles light as air,
Are to the jealous confirmations strong,
As proofs of holy writ."

MAR'S Jack's feelings were not in accordance with the bits of song and merry laughter that floated to his ears, as he stood smoking a cigar in a quiet corner of the veranda, several days after this.

The first quarrel seemed to have made more impression upon him than it had done upon Katie, for he heard the merry voice, and caught glimpses of a pretty blue muslin as she tripped back and forth over the lawn, engaged in a merry game of "graces."

"Who'll be my partner," he heard her ask.

"I will—for life, Miss Lee," he heard Tom Burton answer, laughingly, and foolish Mar's Jack was more disconsolate than ever.

"She scarcely gives me a thought," he mused bitterly.

"They are all inconstant. Their vows are traced in sand. But I had thought Katie, in her sweet, girl-

ish innocence, and artlessness, above all these things. She cannot love me, and treat me as she does with such indifference. She seems much happier away from me. I cannot understand her. Perhaps she was too young—perhaps it was all a mistake—perhaps it would be better—no—I cannot. My whole life is bound up in hers.”

“Howd’y’ Mar’s Jack.”

“Well, Caleb, is that you?” and Jack felt glad of something to turn his thoughts from himself.

“How are you, young man?” striving to speak in a careless tone. “What have you been doing with yourself for the last few days?”

“Me, O, I’s been habin’ a perlicious time,” answered Caleb, seating himself upon the railing and whittling away at a stick.

“What kind of a time is that?”

“A berry good one,” nodding his head emphatically. “I’s been eatin’ mos’ly. O, sech lubly cakes an’ pies,—an’ dat nice col’ stuff wa’t makes yo’ head ache. ’Deed, to tell de truf, Mar’s Jack, I finks dere’s only one discomfort ’bout eatin’ dese heah good tings.”

“What is that?” asked Mar’s Jack, looking amused.

Caleb put his head upon one side.

"Well dey is berry perlicious w'en you tinks 'bout dem, an' w'en you eats 'em, but dey is berry discomfutin' w'en you gets froo. O, berry much so," he added, fervently, remembering nights of pain.

"Have these good things given you much trouble," asked Jack, laughing.

"Trouble? 'Deed I reckon dey has, Mar's Jack. Why acterly, I ain't slep' good one night sence I been in dis heah place, an' ebery night I clar's fore gracious I won't eat no mo', but w'en mornin' comes, tings looks so good, I eats same as eber."

Jack laughed merrily.

"You are willing to take the consequences, if you can have the good things, I suppose. Well that's human nature. We think only of the present," he added, soberly, after a pause.

Caleb stopped whittling, and put his hands into his pockets.

"What kind ob a time has you had, Mar's Jack?"

"I don't know," checking a sigh.

"Tain't been so perlicious fur you, has it?" asked the little scamp, with a knowing wink.

Mar's Jack turned towards him angrily.

"Who said so?"

"O, nobody. I jes' drawed dem 'clusions from tings I seed."

"And pray, what things have you seen, sir?"

"Nuffin much," in a tone that meant "a great deal."

"What do you mean, Caleb?" Jack drew still nearer.

Caleb rolled up his eyes, and grinned, but kept provokingly silent.

"Answer me, sir," and Mar's Jack's tone was not to be disobeyed.

"I fought mebbe dat you didn't like dat man w'at likes Miss Katie."

"What man?" Jack questioned, curiously.

Matters were becoming serious. He knew that Katie had many admirers, but one in particular, that was something of which he had never dreamed.

"Why, dat man wid de big brack eyes w'at paints pictures."

"Ashely, you mean?" and Mar's Jack's face grew very dark.

Caleb nodded.

"Yes, sah. An' he drawed a picture of Miss Katie onct w'en she war sittin' out on de grass under a tree, an' w'en she goed away I seed him kiss it, too, so I did."

Jack placed his thumbs in the arm-holes of his

vest and stood confronting Caleb, with something of a sneer upon his face.

"O, he did! Have you anything more of interest to disclose? Pray go on!"

"Yes; an' dey danced togedder in de liberry onct, w'en no one was dar, an' dey talked togedder an awful long time, an' he telled her dat she were awful pretty, an' dat he lubbed her" (Caleb was given to embellishing a story to suit himself totally regardless of truth). "But dat ain't all I seed," continued the little fellow, growing more and more communicative, little knowing the harm he was doing. "I seed sumfin more onct, only I won't nebber tell w'at it was."

Jack seized hold of Caleb's arm.

"Tell me what you saw. Do you hear?"

"Ow; you hu'ts me, Mar's Jack. Ef you pinches dat away I shan't tell you nuffin."

"I am in no humor for your nonsense, Caleb. Answer me at once."

"Leg'go my arm fust," and Mar's Jack loosened his hold.

"Dat feels mo' comfutable," and Caleb drew a long breath.

"Well," he said, speaking in a teasingly slow manner, "dat ain't all I seed. Kase one night I

seed de pictur man an' Miss Katie standin' in de room whar de white folks allus dances an'”—Caleb lowered his voice and glanced about—“an' he tuck her face 'tween his han's jes' so, an' he kisses her mouf, so he did. An' onct—”

Mar's Jack held up his hand deprecatingly.

“Never mind, Caleb. I do not wish to hear any more,” and Caleb, seeing the expression of Mar's Jack's face, was silenced. Climbing over the railing he dropped down upon the grass below and trotted away, whistling. Mar's Jack watched the retreating figure in an absent way. Then he paced slowly up and down, busy with his own thoughts. Caleb had proved but a Job's comforter to his already heavy heart. He was grieved and angry, not stopping to question Caleb's veracity—for,

(“Whispering tongues can poison truth.”)

What should he do?

Pride answered—

“Nothing.”

Her's had been the wrong—her's should be the reparation. She should come to him, put an end to all between them if need be; he would never seek an explanation. How utterly false she had proved! And yet the sweet winning face would come to his

thoughts, and the blue eyes seemed to plead with him not to judge too harshly.

He remembered her words.

“If I were a man and loved a woman dearly I would stand a great many rebuffs in order to make her mine.”

Love, like charity, covereth a multitude of sins. And over and above all else, his heart told him that he loved her *dearly, dearly*. Perplexed at himself, Mar's Jack turned upon his heel and walked around to the front lawn, where there was a great commotion among the young people, everybody talking, and all talking at once.

“What is the matter?” he asked of Wilton Fairfax, who stood apart from the rest, leaning up against the fence.

“They are trying to get up some new fandango, I believe,” answered Wilton, indulging in a yawn. “Excuse me, Jack, but these barbarously late hours I've been keeping for the last few days make a fellow feel abominably stupid. I don't see how those girls can stand it. Look at them! They are as bright and fresh as they were the first day they came. By the way, Templeton, that friend of yours is a mighty pretty girl,” he added, looking over towards Katie, who was at the other side of the

grounds. She was standing with a grace hoop in one hand, and her rod raised over her shoulder, and was carrying on an animated but merry dispute with Ashely over some questioned point in the game. She made a pretty picture, standing partly in the shadow with the clinging blue draperies about her, and the gypsy hat pushed back from off her face.

“She’s a bonnie wee thing,
She’s a winsome wee thing,”

continued Wilton, lightly, “half in love with her myself. No chance for a fellow there, though. Ashely completely monopolizes her. By Jove! That man has the greatest way of insinuating himself into a girl’s good graces of any fellow I ever saw. All the girls like him, but I don’t wonder, for he’s a prime chap. Don’t you think so?”

Mar’s Jack frowned darkly, but said nothing.

“I say, Jack,” Wilton continued, in his careless way, “I wonder how you could have lived under the same roof with that girl three whole months, without falling in love with her. But you always were a queer — I say, old boy,” he added quickly, catching sight of Jack’s gloomy face, “what is the matter? You have not been like yourself for the last three or four days,” and Wilton placed his hands

upon Jack's shoulders, and looked into the dark, troubled eyes.

"Nothing," answered Jack, in a low tone, turning from him. "Hush! here comes Miss — Miss Lee."

"O Mar's Jack," cried Katie, bounding towards him, forgetting in the excitement of the moment that any coolness existed between them, "we are arranging for a lovely old-fashioned picnic in the woods. Mr. Ashely proposed it, and is going to superintend everything for us. Won't that be splendid?"

Mar's Jack raised his dark eyes and regarded her a moment intently :

"I presume anything Mr. Ashely would propose would be agreeable to you."

Her face flushed hotly, and the blue eyes gave him one swift glance :

"Certainly. Mr. Ashely is a very agreeable companion.

"Mr. Fairfax," she added, turning to that gentleman, "may I ask your attention?"

Wilton was surprised at this passage of arms between Jack and Katie, but he made no comment.

"Miss Lee," he said, in answer to her question, "I am at your service. 'Friends, Romans,' and

Templeton, 'lend me your ears!' Beauty will discourse."

"Well," said Katie, tapping her little pink palm with her fan, as she spoke, "this plan is to be put to the vote, and I want yours. We expect to have a lovely time, and you always champion the cause of fun. It is to be very informal. Just going for a good time. We intend to wear sun-bonnets and gingham aprons over our dresses. I am sure that will suit you, won't it?"

Wilton ran his fingers through his hair.

"Well, I don't know about that, Miss Katie. I might manage a sun-bonnet, but it has been so long since I wore gingham aprons, that I am afraid that I should not know how to behave in one."

Katie laughed merrily.

"You silly boy, you know I don't mean the gentlemen. They can wear anything they choose."

"Oh, thank you," answered Wilton, with a bow. "I thought, perhaps Ashely had proposed it, for the sake of producing an artistic effect among the members of his own sex. I feel greatly relieved, I assure you—"

"You see, Ashely is—"

"Who is taking my name in vain?" asked that

gentleman, sauntering up leisurely, followed by the rest of the party.

"Oh, I was merely saying that," began Wilton—

"That I was a very clever sort of a fellow, etc.," said Ashely, finishing the sentence. "Oh, I understand perfectly."

"Modesty! thy name is Ashely," laughed Katie.

"Those are my sentiments precisely," put in Wilton, nodding approvingly at Katie. "I say, Ashely," he added, turning around, "I hear bad reports of you. Now, if you have a grudge against a fellow, why not fight it out like a man, and not take such a mean way of getting even. A picnic!!! Think of it!"

"Brace up, and meet the picnic like a man," laughed Ashely, slapping Wilton on the back. "Now, to business. Ladies and gentlemen, all in favor of the afore-mentioned picnic, say 'Aye.'"

"Aye," rang out a chorus of feminine voices.

"Those opposed say 'No.'"

"No," very emphatically, from the male portion of the company.

"We will have to try again. All in favor, please signify by raising the right hand. Two, four, six, eight—twelve. All opposed, please signify by the

same motion. Twelve to seven in favor of the picnic. To-morrow, then, at eight, we start forth."

"All right," laughed the girls.

"All wrong," groaned the gentlemen.

Wilton looked the picture of despair.

"Phil," he said, placing his hand upon Ellerton's shoulder, "'if you have tears, prepare to shed them now.' I am going to commit suicide."

"Don't look so disconsolate," laughed Jessie. "Think of all the nice things we are going to have: cake and sandwiches and pies—"

"And mosquitoes and ants and flies; spiders cavorting around over the lunch; liquids upset over solids. Oh, I know all about it, thank you."

"Silence, croaker," laughed Katie. "You have been overruled; so submit to your fate, gracefully at least."

"Gloria! There's the lunch bell. I am as hungry as a bear," cried Tom Burton, springing up from the grass.

"So am I," was echoed by scores of voices, and the lawn was very quickly deserted.

Several hours later a merry party rode away from Bellevue. They gradually became separated, taking different roads into town, agreeing to meet at the same place and ride home in a body. Mar's

Jack's face grew dark as he saw Ashely and Katie ride together down one of the less frequented roads. He did not know, foolish Mar's Jack, that the heart which beat under the dark blue riding-jacket was as heavy as his own.

"Let us ride over to the old church, Miss Katie. We will spend the afternoon there and ride into town in time to meet the others," and Katie assenting, they were soon roaming about among the tombstones.

"This gloomy old place has a fascination for me, somehow or other," said Ashely, pushing open the church door. "Come inside, Miss Katie, and let us have some music. We have not been here since the wedding day. Do you remember?" turning around suddenly.

She reddened slightly.

"Why, of course. It was only four days ago," she said, with a little careless laugh.

"Only four days ago? It seems longer. That was a red letter day in my life, with only one drawback. I am afraid you have not quite forgiven that 'stolen kiss' yet, Miss Lee. I would apologize again if I thought it would re-instate me once more in your good graces."

No, Katie had not quite forgiven him, and yet

when her thoughts reverted to Mar's Jack, she felt ready to do anything by way of revenge.

"Why did he treat her so coolly? He surely could not love her. Then he flirted so shamefully with Jessie Fairfax, and did not seem to consider his engagement binding in the least. O, she was greatly to be pitied."

Katie was finding much solace in searching for sins to lay upon Mar's Jack's shoulders. It was so easy to blame him for her own shortcomings.

"Yes, Mar's Jack had treated her very badly," she determined, "and she must—"

"What are you thinking of, Miss Lee? Your face has assumed a dozen different expressions during the last three minutes. And I, poor wretch, have been standing here in fear and trembling to know my fate. Am I entirely forgiven?"

She looked up at him from under the long lashes.

"Are you very anxious to be restored to my favor?"

Ashely stood tapping his riding boot with his whip.

"Your good opinion is worth more to me than that of anyone else in the world, Miss Lee," he said, in a low tone.

"Why, of course you are forgiven. Do not take it

so seriously," she answered, with a light laugh. "You asked me for music. Come, let's sing something together," and she seated herself at the organ, which had not yet been taken back to Bellevue. Ashely followed slowly up the aisle, wondering at this little piece of innocence and coquetry. He only knew that he loved her with his whole heart.

"Sing alone, Miss Katie, won't you? My voice isn't in tune to-day."

"What shall I sing? Hush!" she added, turning around quickly. "What was that noise?"

Ashely laughed.

"Ghosts, perhaps. You are always imagining that one of them will make his appearance. Perhaps music hath charms to soothe the ghostly breast as well as the savage one, Miss Lee. So put a quietus upon them with a song."

Katie ran her fingers over the keys.

"What shall I sing?" she queried again. Then before Ashely had time to answer she broke into a plaintive little ballad, the lovely voice echoing and re-echoing through the old church, dying away in low wailing tones, as of the moaning of some lost spirit. Then the pretty head drooped and two big tears fell upon the keys. She wiped them away quickly, and looked up with a light laugh.

“That was a dreadfully blue song, wasn’t it? I don’t like it one bit. I prefer singing without the organ, anyhow,” and she sang a merry jingling little air, keeping time to the music with her foot.

Ashely regarded her intently for a few moments.

“You are an enigma to me, Miss Lee. But I shall not believe an insolvable one. Do you know I am quite an exception to the rule? The Ashelys invariably fall in love with Southern girls. Even my stern old father had quite a ‘penchant’ for some dark-eyed girl of the South. But here am I, completely bewitched by a certain little Northern lady, who practices so many bewildering arts that she positively deserves to be tried for witchcraft.”

“O, do tell me about your father,” she said, looking up with most innocent air possible, and not seeming to take the slightest heed of the latter part of his remark. “I am the greatest girl for romances you ever saw.”

“Well, I don’t know that there was much of a romance. He was desperately in love with some Southern girl, who jilted him, I believe. He was such a stern, quiet old man, that I never dreamed of anything of the kind ever happening in his life, until, in looking over his effects after his death, I found some letters that told the whole story. I

don't know anything about the lady except that she always signed herself, 'yours, ever, Ruth.' So you see it wasn't very much of a romance after all. But what's the matter?" he asked, anxiously. "Are you ill?"

The color came back into her face.

"O, nothing," she answered, nervously, playing with the little pearl ring upon her finger. "It was only momentary. There—my ring"—as it slipped from her grasp and rolled away upon the floor.

"Now, that's too bad of you, Miss Katie. My wish is null and void;" and Ashely stooped to pick up the ring.

"This is very pretty," he added, examining it closely, little knowing that his stern old father had slipped the same ring upon Ruth Templeton's slender finger long, long ago.

"Miss Lee?" he asked, suddenly, looking keenly into the blue eyes as he handed her the ring, "Will you think me intrusive if I ask a question. Are you engaged?"

The dark head was raised proudly.

"I will not answer a question of that kind, Mr. Ashely."

"Katie," speaking in a low, earnest tone, "I do

not ask out of mere curiosity. Won't you tell me? Are you engaged?"

She jumped up from the organ seat and picked up her riding-hat and whip.

"Whatever put such a ridiculous idea into your head? Why, I am

In maiden meditation fancy free,'
of course.

"Come, Mr. Ashely, the day waneth, and we must depart," she added, airily, tripping down the aisle.

"Why, where are our horses?" she cried, in dismay, as they reached the church door.

"Echo answers where," and Ashely looked about him with a puzzled expression. But search where he would the horses were nowhere to be found.

"I can not find them," he admitted, at last, reluctantly. "They must have gone back to Bellevue."

"What shall we do?" she queried, despairingly. Ashely shook his head.

"I don't know, Miss Katie. We can do nothing except 'wend our weary way' homeward on foot, unless you are willing to stay here while I—"

“O, mercy, no!” she interrupted, with an expression of horror. “Nothing would induce me to stay in this place alone. I’ll walk,” and with a little sigh she took her place at his side and trudged homeward.

CHAPTER XI.

"Beware of too sublime a sense,
Of your own worth and consequence."

MEANWHILE the rest of the party, after waiting in vain at the place of rendezvous, returned to Bellevue, where a search was begun immediately for the truants.

"Well, if they are here, I can not find them, that is certain. And it is too warm to exert one's self this weather," said Jessie Fairfax, seating herself upon the sofa, and fanning vigorously.

"They are on the road home, probably. We need not expect to see them for hours," put in Lucy Burton, sitting down beside Jessie Fairfax. "Fan me Jessie, or I shall expire immediately."

"That is a 'gone case,'" laughed Phil Ellerton. "One match made at this wedding, anyhow. I wonder who'll be the next?" And he gave a sly glance at Cad Nelson, making that young lady blush to the roots of her hair.

"Jack and Jessie will probably follow suit," said Wilton, teasingly.

Jessie looked provoked.

“Do hush, Wilton,” with a glance at Mar’s Jack, who stood at the other end of the room, conversing with Miss Tessy.

“Now, if Tessy, heavenly maid, were young,” continued Wilton, “I should say that she was supplanting you in Jack’s affections; but taking all things into consideration, especially the lady herself, I think your chances are pretty fair yet. So do your best there, for Templeton is a tip top fellow, and no mistake.”

“What’s wanting, Wilton,” called Jack, hearing his name spoken.

Wilton looked around roguishly.

“O, nothing! I was just giving Jessie, here, a little brotherly advice about improving the shining moments as they fly, that’s all.”

And Jack, not understanding the laugh that followed, bowed gravely, and turned to Miss Tessy again.

“Mr. Templeton, if Miss Hepsworth will kindly excuse you, I should like very much to see you for a short time,” interrupted old Peter Brown, tapping Jack’s shoulder and nodding mysteriously. “I beg pardon for the intrusion, but my business with you is very important.”

Miss Tessy smiled at old Peter, over the top of her fan.

“La, now, Mr. Brown, don’t mind one bit about apologizing. I have to go up to my room, to write some letters, and Jacky can go with you, can’t you Jacky?” and she smiled and bowed as “Jacky” followed old Peter to the veranda.

“Here, young man! I have business with this gentleman; so move on,” ordered Peter, seeing Caleb on the veranda steps.

Now if Caleb had been ordered to remain, he would probably have scampered away as fast as the little black legs would have carried him. As it was, he seated himself with a determined air.

“I ain’t gwine ter pay no ’tention ter youse,” he muttered impudently, taking care not to speak distinctly, however.

Jack came up to him.

“Caleb, can’t you mind when you are spoken to? This gentleman says that you are to go away. So, skip! Do you hear?”

Caleb changed his tactics and began to plead:

“Please ter let me stay, Mar’s Jack! I’ll ’have myself. I hones’ly hain’t got no whar else ter go, an’ dis place is so bery comfortable. Won’t yer let me stay, Mar’s Peter?”

Old Peter looked doubtful.

“Why, I don’t know that I really have any very great objections; and yet,” in an aside to Jack, “the boy might communicate what he hears.”

“He must go away, of course, Mr. Brown. I will not have any more of his nonsense,” and Mar’s Jack started towards him.

The little fellow immediately began to descend the steps, very reluctantly, however, and muttering in an undertone to himself all the way. Then a bright thought came into his head, and he sat down upon the lowest step.

“My leg’s so sore dat I hones’ly can’t go no further,” he whined, pulling at a red flannel rag that was wound about his leg.

O Caleb! Caleb! how can you practice such deception on these two unsuspecting gentlemen? That rag was tied about your leg but a short time since, in imitation of the old lame hen in the poultry yard.

“Oh, well, let the child stay there, if he is hurt,” said Mr. Brown; and Mar’s Jack, who was too worried and heavy of heart to give much heed to Caleb, merely turned to Mr. Brown, with

“I am at your service, sir.”

Old Peter coughed once or twice, and glanced about nervously.

“Ahem! well — ahem! I say, Mr. Templeton, that friend of yours is a very pretty, well-spoken miss.”

Jack looked up curiously.

“Katie — Miss Lee, you mean?”

“Yes, yes; that’s the one. Don’t you think so?”

“She is very, very pretty,” Jack answered, in a low tone.

Old Peter nodded.

“Yes, indeed, she is — ahem!” fumbling nervously with his watch chain. “Well, about how old do you think the young lady is?”

Jack was becoming interested. Why was he being cross-questioned in this way?

“She is eighteen, I believe, Mr. Brown.”

“Eighteen?” rubbing his chin thoughtfully, “humph! Eighteen; well, she might be older; but that is not so very young. I say, Templeton,” taking Jack by the button-hole, “I think I will marry that girl.”

“What?” Mar’s Jack started as though he had been shot, and Caleb’s big round eyes opened to their widest extent.

Old Peter straightened himself with dignity.

"I said I thought I would marry the lady—that is, of course, if she herself is willing. Have you anything to say against it?"

But Mar's Jack could only stare at old Peter, in an amazed way. Then he suddenly threw back his head and laughed immoderately, while Caleb burst the last button off his suspender and rolled off the step.

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded Mr. Brown, highly indignant. "Do you see anything very laughable in that, sir?"

Jack sobered down instantly.

"I beg your pardon," he answered humbly, but with a twinkle in his eye, nevertheless. "I was a little surprised, that's all. You see, your—your (nose, Jack was about to say) age, sir—"

"My age, sir!" interrupted the old gentleman, irately; "I am only nine and fifty, sir. I am one of the wealthiest men in the county, and my name is one of the oldest. Many a young lady would 'jump at the chance,' sir!" and old Peter drew himself up proudly.

"Certainly," answered Mar's Jack in a conciliatory manner. "Any lady should feel honored to have your attention. But,—this young lady—"

“Well?” very shortly.

“This young lady is engaged.”

Old Peter drew a long breath.

“Engaged? Indeed? To whom, may I ask?”

Mar’s Jack hesitated.

“To myself,” he answered, in a low tone, after a pause.

“Is it possible? Well, well, I never should have dreamed it. O, you sly dog!” laughed old Peter, “I understand your conduct now. You were afraid of me as a rival. Ha! Ha! Don’t be alarmed my boy,” he added, slapping Jack upon the shoulder. “I shall not try to get your little treasure from you. Don’t be afraid of me, though I am such a ladies’ man,” and old Peter laughed heartily at Jack’s expense.

“Well, that puts a new face upon the affair,” he continued, after a pause. “Let me see. Do you know any lady a little nearer my own age, perhaps (mind, I don’t consider myself old at all), one more mature and not so giddy as these young creatures are apt to be, whom I might address?”

“I knows one, Mar’s Peter,” put in Caleb, before Jack had time to answer. “Miss Tessy is de gal fur you.”

Jack feared the old gentleman would be angry, but, strange to say, Peter's face brightened.

"Well, now, I never thought of that," he chuckled, seeming to think it all a good joke. "That would be a pretty good plan. She is very good-natured and pleasant, comes of a fine old family, and, in fact, I believe Miss Tessy would suit me very well. Here, shake hands, little fellow," and he shook Caleb's hand vigorously.

"I say," he added, coming up close to Mar's Jack, and whispering in his ear, "You won't mention this conversation to anyone?"

"Certainly not," and having obtained Jack's word, old Peter walked away, leaving Caleb to roll down the steps again, turn three summersaults, and lie out on the lawn for at least five minutes, shaking with laughter, after which he sobered down and came to Jack's side.

"Say, Mar's Jack," he said, winking knowingly, "I kin tell whar Miss Katie done went ter dis heah day."

Jack's face darkened.

"She went ter de ole church wiv Mar's Ashely, soshe did, an'"—Caleb backed down the steps—"an' dey's gwine ter hab ter walk home too, so dey is."

“What do you mean, Caleb?” asked Jack, sternly.

“Nuffin, only dere horses is in the stable now,” answered the little imp, leering and darting away.

Sure enough, as Ashely had surmised, the horses were in the stalls at Bellevue, quietly munching hay, and looking the pictures of injured innocence. So it was decided that they had returned of their own accord. I have my doubts as to that solution of the mystery, however. For, I think, if Ashely and Katie had been less engrossed with each other that afternoon, they would have seen a short, fat boy, mounted upon one horse and leading another, ride out cautiously from the graveyard and take the road to Bellevue. Certain it is, that Caleb’s face assumed a grin that afternoon which did not wear away for several days.

CHAPTER XII.

“Ah me ! For aught that ever I could read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth.”

“TIME’S up, girls,” called Wilton Fairfax, at the foot of the stairway.

“No more ‘priming’ allowed,” chimed in Phil Ellerton.

“Ready in a minute,” was the answer, and shortly afterwards a long procession of girls, with gingham aprons over their dresses and huge sun-bonnets shading their faces from view, marched down stairs, double file, with arms folded and eyes turned upward.

“Jupiter Ammon ! What have we here ?” ejaculated Tom Burton.

“I give it up. My delicate nerves can not stand the shock,” groaned Wilton. “Here, Phil, support me.”

“Can’t do it. I can hardly stand it myself. Some orphan asylum let loose upon us, I think,” answered Phil, in a faint voice.

This upset the gravity of the whole procession, and Phil was interrupted by a merry burst of laughter.

"Don't we look bewitching?" asked Jessie Fairfax, roguishly.

Wilton straightened himself and frowned at her.

"That I call adding insult to injury. You have proceeded one step beyond the bounds, madam; but come," he added, changing his tone, "do let's start. Here, Cassius and Frank, shoulder these baskets. Is every body here?"

"Where's Jack Templeton?" asked Phil Ellerton, looking around.

"Don't feel well this A.M.; has a headache, I believe. Will be out in the afternoon," answered Wilton, gathering up a bundle of shawls.

Katie was troubled. How could she enjoy herself, when she knew Mar's Jack was at home, with an aching head (she might have added an aching heart). She would go to him—no—the pretty lips were closed tightly. Mar's Jack had neglected her; had treated her coolly. He must be the first to relent.

The merry party filled two large wagons, and they drove away, laughing gayly and waving their handkerchiefs to those who remained.

Mar's Jack stood concealed behind the library curtain, and as he watched them drive away his eye sought the one so dear to him. He frowned when he saw who sat at her side, and watched the expressive face brighten as she talked. Katie seemed the gayest of the gay, and Mar's Jack turned from the window, with the old bitter feeling, not knowing that Katie's heart was sore, despite her bright smiles, for

"'T is a womanly art to hide pain out of sight ;
To look around with a smile,
Though the heart ache the while."

For the first mile or so, the merry spirits did not flag ; but as the sun grew hotter, there were evident signs of weariness.

"Do raise that umbrella over my head, Mr. Elberton," implored Cad Nelson, raising her bright eyes beseechingly. "I am just ready to melt."

"Old Sol is trying to liquidate us all, I think," answered Phil, hastening to comply with her request.

"I pity you girls with fair complexions," laughed Jessie Fairfax, pushing back the hair from her own dark, pretty face. "Why, Katie, your nose is getting dreadfully freckled," she added, teasingly.

"Is it ?" asked Katie, in dismay, rubbing that

dainty little feature ruefully. "Mr. Fairfax, I appeal to you: Is my nose getting very freckled?"

Wilton assumed a horrified expression:

"Oh, shockingly so! I never saw anything so dreadful in my life. Each freckle is about the size of a penny; so you may imagine how you look. I can hardly stand the sight myself," and Wilton covered his face with his hands.

"Thank goodness, it's your nose, instead of mine, this time," laughed Cad Nelson, touching her much-abused pug.

"Well, that celestial little appendage," began Wilton, but Phil stopped him.

"One word of insult towards Miss Nelson's nasal organ, and your own will assume twice its natural size, sir."

Wilton doubled his fists.

"'Lay on Macduff!' I will fight for honor and for nose."

"I say, Fairfax," murmured Tom Burton, at this juncture. "This gets monotonous. A fellow doesn't mind riding a mile or two in the hot sun; but when it comes to ten—"

"Ten! your grandmother," interrupted Wilton; "two, you mean. And here we are at last; so cease

your grumbling," he added, as they drove into a large grove of shade trees, and the wagons were quickly emptied of their occupants.

"What shall we do first?" questioned Jessie Fairfax.

Wilton gave a scornful sniff.

"Do! as though there were but one thing *to do*!

" 'To dinner! to dinner! with fork and with knife!'

"A new version of an old quotation. Ladies, make ready for the onslaught."

A shady spot was chosen for the "spread," and in a very short space of time, sandwiches, cake, pie, *et cetera*, were disappearing with great rapidity.

"The pickles, if you please, Miss Nelson," requested Phil Ellerton.

"That looks suspicious, Mr. Ellerton," she answered, giving him an arch look. "That is the third time I have handed them to you. You must be in love."

Phil looked at her, over the pickle-jar.

"I am," he answered significantly, at which Cad blushed crimson.

"Is that a sign of love? Then hand the pickles immediately," said Tom Burton. "I am madly in love with Miss Lee; only she won't have me."

"How do you know?" asked that young lady, pertly.

"Will you, Miss Lee?"

Katie laughed.

"Maybe. I will see how you behave, first."

"Well, what did I tell you?" groaned Wilton Fairfax. "My predictions have been fulfilled. Here is a daddy-long-legs performing gymnastic feats upon the frosting of Miss Tessy's lemon pie;" and he held up the struggling insect between his thumb and finger.

"Miss Tessy, what shall I do with it?"

"Eh?" questioned Miss Tessy; then seeing the pie, "Oh, eat it, my dear; I don't want it, I am sure."

Wilton bowed.

"Thank you for the kind, disinterested suggestion, Miss Tessy; but my stomach's hardly strong enough to permit of anything of the kind at present. Well, friends," he continued, folding his napkin resolutely, "I have said nothing about the party of ants that have been promenading up and down the table-cloth for the last hour. "Indeed, I have even winked at a spider or two; but this is too much. I abdicate the throne in favor of 'daddy,'" and Wilton sprang up from the grass and busied

himself in selecting a shady place for a game of "graces."

The rest soon followed Wilton's example, and "daddy" and the ants were left to the enjoyment of such portions of the feast as were scattered about on the grass.

"Miss Katie," said Ashely, in the course of the afternoon, after an exciting game of "graces" in which Katie had come off victorious, "will you take a stroll with your humble servant?"

"Certainly," she answered, picking up her sun-bonnet and tying it under the dimpled chin; "whither away?"

"Anywhere, anywhere, out of the world!"

Katie drew back.

"No, thank you. I am not ready to leave this sphere at present. I'd 'rather bear those ills I have, than fly to those I know not of;' so you will have to make your journey alone."

"Well, we won't leave the world at present, then," laughed Ashely. "Here is a cool shady place, Miss Lee. Shall we tarry here?"

Katie seated herself on the grass and pushed back the sun-bonnet from her face, letting the breeze play lightly with the dark curls that clustered about the white forehead.

Ashely threw himself upon the grass at her feet, and lay resting upon one arm, looking up at her from under his great straw hat.

"Do you know, Miss Katie," he said, after a pause, idly pulling off the little clover tops about him, "that I shall be very sorry to leave Bellevue?"

Katie's face assumed its most innocent expression.

"Sorry? oh, so will I, for I've had the best time imaginable. Indeed, I think every one will be sorry; don't you?"

"I shall be more than sorry. Katie," he asked suddenly, "don't you know that you are very, very beautiful?"

The white forehead was knotted into a frown, and she raised her hand with a little impatient gesture.

"Do you think that a woman cares for nothing else but flattery?" she asked, ungraciously. "I suppose you would like to alter the catechism, and say that woman's chief end is, to be admired."

Ashely looked amused, at this outburst.

"Now, you *know*, Miss Katie, that you do not desire to be very, very *ugly*, do you?"

Katie sat folding the hem of her apron into little plaits."

“ Well, no,” she admitted reluctantly, “ I should not want to be *very, very ugly*. But then, I hate flattery.”

“ And so do I,” echoed Ashely, smiling tenderly up into the blue eyes ; “ but I did not flatter you. Don’t you know, Katie, that your face is the sweetest thing on earth to me ? ” he added earnestly, raising himself upon one knee and taking one small hand in both of his ; “ Don’t you know, Katie, that I love you better than my own life ? Katie, dare I hope to win you as my own ? ”

She sat silent a moment, as if stunned ; then drawing her hand from him, she rose quickly to her feet.

“ Mr. Ashely, I do not understand. Don’t you know that I am — that I can not love you ? ”

He seized both her hands in his, and held them so tightly that they throbbed with pain.

“ Hush ! do not tell me that ! ” he said, hoarsely, “ anything but that, Katie ! You do not — can not know how truly I love you. Won’t you try — ”

“ You git ’way from my Mar’s Jack’s gal,” interrupted an indignant voice, and the next moment Caleb sprang upon Ashely like a tiger, and struck right and left with his little black fists.

“ Where on earth did you come from ? ” de-

manded Ashely, shaking him off after he had sufficiently recovered the first surprise. "And in the name of all that's good, what do you mean?"

Caleb stood glaring at him defiantly.

"Nebber min' whar I comed from. Dat's my Mar's Jack's gal," pointing to Katie, "an' you hain't got no bizness a techin' her. My Mar's Jack, an' Miss Katie and me, all done got begaged togedder one day, so we did, an' my Mar's Jack's gwine ter kill you mos' ter def w'en he catches a holt on ter yer, ef you don' let Miss Katie 'lone."

Ashely looked puzzled.

"What on earth does he mean?" he asked, turning to Katie.

But Katie made no reply. Her face was deadly pale and her eyes were fixed upon the tall figure that stood at some distance from them. Every ray of color had left Mar's Jack's face, and his lips were firmly set together. He came forward before Ashely had time to speak.

"Come, Caleb," he said, in a low, strange voice, grasping the little fellow's arm. "I beg your pardon for the intrusion," he added, lifting his hat without raising his eyes, and walking rapidly away.

Caleb was not to be silenced so easily. He kept turning around and shaking his little fists at Ashely

and exclaiming: "O, we'se gwine ter kill you w'en we catches a holt on ter yer, so we is," until they were out of sight. Then Katie sank upon the ground and covered her face with her hands. Ashely came and bent over her.

"Katie, Katie, darling, what does this mean? What is the matter?" he asked, gently, placing his hand upon the dark wavy hair.

But Katie made no reply. She sat silent a long time.

"Katie," he whispered, at last, "Won't you tell me?"

Then she sprang up and pushed him away from her.

"Go away, I hate you," she cried, passionately, her whole frame trembling with emotion.

A numbed, pained feeling seized hold upon his heart.

"Katie, what do you mean? You hate me?" he repeated, slowly.

"Yes, I hate you. You have come between me and the only man I ever loved. I was engaged to Mar's Jack, and now—now—all is over."

Ashely's face was very white, and he still spoke in the same low tone.

“Engaged? You told me that you were free, Katie?”

She had lost all control of herself now, and standing there, with the sunbonnet pushed back from the face flushed with passion, she looked like a little angry child.

“I know it; but I was engaged, and I am engaged, and I only said I wasn’t because I was angry with Mar’s Jack—and I wish you would go away; I want to be alone.”

Ashely turned away. Then he came slowly back and stood with folded arms, looking fixedly at her.

“Katie, Katie,” he said at last, “What have I done to deserve this at your hands?”

The eyelids fell, and the brown head drooped before him.

“I have forgotten myself. Forgive me,” she whispered tremulously.

“Katie, you have wronged me deeply,” and he turned and walked rapidly away.

Katie stood looking about her in a dazed way; then all became dark, and with a cry, she fell heavily to the ground. When she opened her eyes, some one was bending over her. Could it be? Yes,

it was, Mar's Jack, with the same strange look upon his face, and yet Katie thought that the brown eyes looked yearningly, even tenderly, into her own.

For one moment, one long happy moment, the blue eyes answered that look; then she released herself quickly from his arms.

"You'se been mos' dead, Mis' Katie," said a little voice, that tantalizing voice that she always heard when she least desired to hear it.

"Yo' face was jes' as white an' yo' eyes was shet up tight like dis, an' Mar's Jack tried ter kiss dem open, but—"

Here he was interrupted by a sharp nudge from Jack's elbow, to which, as usual, he gave no heed.

"Yes, he kissed dem an awful lot, and we fought you'se a gwine ter die, sho', but Mar's Jack rubbed yo' han's an' face, an' douse cole water on yer, an' now you'se mos' peart's eber, ain't yer?"

Katie's face was crimson.

"Thank you for the assistance rendered me," she said, hesitatingly, bowing to Mar's Jack as she started to leave them.

"Katie," and Mar's Jack placed himself before her.

She stopped.

"Sir?"

"Have you nothing to say to me?"

"Nothing," she answered, coldly.

"Not one word, Katie? Is it nothing that you have this day proved false to all that I hold sacred? Nothing, that you have tossed aside my love as a child would throw away the toy that no longer pleased its fancy? Nothing, it may be to you, Katie, but to me, a matter of the deepest import, and I will have an explanation."

The blue eyes flashed angrily.

"What right have you to speak in that way, sir?"

"What right? Have I not every right, Katie? I trusted you so entirely and you have proven wholly false."

"You had better shut me up where no one can even see me, if you are so much afraid of my charms," with a slight curl of the lip. "Could I help his loving me?"

"You encouraged him, Katie. You led him on—and you knew how wrong it was—you knew that you were mine."

"I am not yours," growing angry and childish. "What right have you to send that ugly little Caleb to spy out all my actions?"

"He nebber sended me," put in Cabe; "I hanged

on 'hind de donkey cart all de way, an' he nebber knowed I'se dah till we got heah."

"I will not stand it," continued Katie, not taking the slightest heed of Cabe's interruption, "I will not be watched like a thief. Henceforth there is nothing more between us," and she slipped the ring from her finger and laid it in his hand.

Mar's Jack remained silent a moment.

"You give me back my ring, Katie?"

"I do."

"Then this ends it all," and with a bitter laugh he tossed it from him into the tall grass, and a deep silence fell upon them.

Katie was the first to speak.

"I will go back to the others," she said, at last.

"The rest have gone home."

"Gone home?" she gasped.

"Yes, they supposed that you had returned home with"—Mar's Jack hesitated, "with—Ashely, but I thought otherwise, and so came to find you." He did not tell her that he had seen his rival take a short cut to Bellevue on foot.

Poor Ashely, all unconscious that the others had gone, and feeling in no mood to answer the numerous questions with which he was sure of being plied had started to Bellevue alone.

"What shall I do?" asked Katie, despairingly.

"I have Miss Tessy's donkey cart, if you will ride with me."

"Thank you, I will walk."

"Very well," and Mar's Jack went back for the cart, well knowing that she would not long hold out in this resolution.

Down the dusty road trudged Katie, the donkey cart coming slowly at some distance behind her.

For the first mile she held out bravely, but by and by her steps began to flag. She would quicken her pace as the cart approached, but it finally came up to her and passed her. Then Mar's Jack, looking backward, saw a little figure seated on a stone by the roadside resting its chin upon its hands and its elbows on its knees. He drove back and getting out lifted her as he would have done a little wilful child, and placed her in one corner of the cart. They rode on in silence. Katie felt angry and uncomfortable; she was at variance with herself and the whole world beside. She had looked forward with so much pleasure to the visit at Bellevue, and this was the end. She had deeply wounded Mar's Jack, had treated Ashely shamefully and had made herself thoroughly wretched. Well! life was a very disappointing thing after all. Reality is so different from anticipation.

Then how was she to meet Ashely on her return, and what was she to do about Woodburn? She could never go back there to live now; and yet, where could she go? Her father was still in Europe and she had not a single living relative with whom she could stay. But she could never stay where Mar's Jack was—and she stole a glance at the stern, dark face from under her long lashes—no, not for worlds. He treated her like a spoiled child, any how. What right had he to take her up and put her into the buggy with so little ceremony? and the blue eyes flashed indignantly. She was very angry with him. Yes, she was sure of that. Perhaps she would feel differently by and by though. Now, if they were only in a romance, perhaps the buggy would break down and she would faint, and Mar's Jack would bend over her and call her his darling begging her to come back to this world, and he would forgive all.

But no, there was not the least chance for anything, even in the slightest degree romantic. The cart, rickety and old as it was, held together only too well, and Billy jogged along in a very slow and common-place manner. Despite her misery, Katie felt a wild, uncontrollable desire to laugh, everything looked so ridiculous.

There was Mar's Jack in one corner of the seat

and she in the other, as far apart as it was possible to be. Caleb was seated down in front with his chin resting upon the dash-board, the corners of his mouth drawn down and his little face the picture of abject woe ; even Billy seemed affected by the pervading spirit of wretchedness, and trotted along with drooping ears and an altogether forlorn aspect. Katie stole a second glance at Mar's Jack to see if his sense of the ridiculous had been awakened, but he looked straight before him and turned his eyes neither to the right nor to the left, so she settled herself back into the corner and heartily coincided with Caleb, who, when they reached Bellevue, exclaimed with a long drawn breath :

“De Lawd knows, I'm glad we'se home.”

• CHAPTER XIII.

“Woman, that fair and fond deceiver,
How prompt are striplings to believe her.

* * * * *

How quick we credit every oath,
And hear her plight her willing troth !
Fondly we hope 'twill last for aye,
When, lo ! She changes in a day.”

KATIE'S dread of meeting Ashely increased as they neared Bellevue. Her fears were groundless, however, as he had gone away that evening, pleading an urgent business call as his excuse for immediate departure. As it was late and most of the guests had retired to dress for dinner, Katie went directly to her own room. She longed to throw herself upon the bed and have a good hearty cry ; but no ; Miss Tessy or one of the girls might come in, and she did hate to be pitied and condoled with. Then she did not care to appear at dinner with swollen eyes and a nose like a button, for one never looks pretty when one cries, despite the fact that story books tell of “her lovely, tear-stained face.” No, taking all things into consideration, she would not cry ; so biting the red lips and pressing the nails into the little pink palms, she nerved herself for the

ordeal. What should she wear? She must look her brightest and best to-night. So donning the pretty blue silk that Mar's Jack liked so well, and fastening some flowers at her belt and in the dark hair, she surveyed herself critically in the mirror.

"You look well my lady, but pale, much too pale. You must never play the 'maiden, all forlorn,'" and she rubbed her cheeks until they glowed brilliantly.

"There! You will do now," and she walked to the door.

"O, how my head throbs!" placing both hands to her forehead; "I wish, O, I wish that I did not have to go down.

"There, Katie Lee, I am ashamed of you," she added with a little nervous laugh, "I did not know that you could be so weak and silly; go down, at once," and opening the door she ran against Cad Nelson.

"O, Katie, you are just the girl I want to see. You look just lovely. How do I look?"

"Pretty. You always do, Cad."

"Thanks. Well, I ought to look happy to-night at least. O, Kit, I've something very important to tell you. I am dying to confide in somebody, and I like you better than any of the other girls. Promise never to tell, won't you?"

Katie nodded.

“Well,”—Cad looked up and down the hall and then leaned over and whispered in Katie’s ear, “Phil and I are engaged.”

Katie hypocritically expressed the surprise that she knew was expected, for Cad and Phil honestly believed that they had been the most decorous of lovers, and that no one even suspected anything between them.

“I am sure I am very glad, and I hope that you will be very, very happy,” said Katie, softly—misery was only for herself. Indeed, she hoped that Cad would never know what it was to be so wretched.

There was a softened expression in Cad’s bright, brown eyes.

“Indeed, I know that I will be very, very happy. Phil is so good and so noble, and I would not ask to change him in the least. He could not do anything that would displease me, and I don’t believe we shall ever quarrel, for I love him so dearly.”

Katie wondered if this were the way to feel towards one’s lover. She was sure that Mar’s Jack had done many, many things that had displeased her. Certainly they had quarreled very often. She must be far from the right for she did love so dearly to have her own way.

“Would you give up anything on earth, for him, Cad?”

“Indeed, I would. Do you know, Katie, if Phil were to ask me to go to the wilds of Africa with him, or even as a missionary to the Sandwich Islands, I would leave everything and go.”

Cad’s enthusiasm was unbounded.

Katie was sure now that she was very far in the wrong. She was sure that she had never experienced any such pure, noble, unselfish feelings. She was very sure, that if Mar’s Jack had asked her to go with him as a missionary to the Sandwich Islands she would have said “no,” most emphatically, and indeed would have been very much horrified at the idea. No, she had never felt in that way.

“Cad,” she ventured hesitatingly, “Don’t you really think that you will ever care for the society of any other persons—gentlemen I mean—now?”

Cad shook her head, “No, I am quite sure; if I have Phil I do not care if I never even see anybody else again.”

Katie gave herself up as utterly hopeless. She remembered with a pang how much she had enjoyed talking with Ashely, and joking and flirting with Wilton Fairfax and Tom Burton. Yes, she was quite a hopeless case.

"Cad," she said, slowly, putting her head upon one side and speaking in a very worldly-wise tone, "No matter how much you are tempted, don't, for anything, flirt."

And having delivered this bit of sensible advice, Miss Lee took Cad's arm and went down to the dining hall.

Mar's Jack did not look at Katie once during dinner. He sat between his mother and Jessie Fairfax, and although Katie seemed busily engaged in conversation with Wilton Fairfax, she could have given a detailed account of Jack's conduct throughout the entire meal. He was always polite and attentive to any lady,—old or young, but he certainly seemed very anxious to please Miss Fairfax. Jessie looked very pretty in the delicate pink muslin, that so well became her dark beauty, and she, herself, really seemed desirous of making an impression upon Mar's Jack, by the way she smiled and glanced up at him from under the dark lashes. But of course that was nothing to Katie now. Oh, no! Mar's Jack was free, and could do as he chose.

Indeed Jessie Fairfax would be a good wife for him. She was rich and pretty, and sweet tempered and then she never flirted. Yes, Jessie would suit Mar's Jack much better than she had done.

Then she fell to picturing a scene at quiet, old Woodburn, viz ; tall, graceful Jessie, seated in the drawing room. Mar's Jack bending devotedly over her, while Mrs. Templeton smiled her benediction on the happy couple from the other side of the room.

Indeed, so busily was she engaged in dreaming, that she heard not one word of the amusing story that Wilton was relating, and when he asked her,

“What do you think about it, Miss Katie,” she answered,

“Well, yes, I should say so,” in the most stupid manner possible.

But Wilton only laughed in his good humored way, as they arose from the table, and said that he feared that the day's events had been too much for her.

To which she answered, with a strange little laugh, “Indeed they have, Mr. Fairfax.”

The drawing room was full to overflowing, and every one seemed determined to make this—the last evening at Bellevue, a very enjoyable one, indeed.

Wilton was trotting about here and there, arranging a programme for dancing.

“Don't let any body take my place, please, Miss

Katie, I want the first dance, if you are willing," he said, as he left her side a moment.

Katie's head ached severely. She was nervous and excited, and she longed to escape from all this noise and confusion. Yet, despite the old adage that "he who fights and runs away, will live to fight another day," she determined to stay and fight out her battle against self, come, what might.

Was everyone else happy but herself? Katie glanced about the room.

There was Cad Nelson, looking so pretty and so happy, in one corner next to Phil Ellerton, who sat gazing down into the bright eyes with a look that spoke volumes.

There was a group of young people, standing near the piano, laughing and talking as though such things as "aching hearts," were wholly unknown.

Yes—everybody seemed happy, but her, poor, lonely, little self.

Even Miss Tessy in the dotted, green silk, and the black lace shawl, beamed radiantly over the top of her crimson plush fan at Old Peter Brown.

(But flirting was a dangerous business) even for Miss Tessy—she must warn her against it. The idea struck her as being so ridiculous, however, that she smiled in spite of herself.

Wilton coming up at that moment imagined the smile was for him, and gave one of his brightest in return.

"I was ever so sorry to be gone such a length of time, Miss Katie, but one of those long-tongued elderly females, button-holed me, and I couldn't get away. Will you dance the Reel?"

"No, my head aches," she started to say, but seeing Mar's Jack take his place with Jessie Fairfax, she answered quickly.

"Yes, indeed. It's a great favorite of mine," and Wilton led her out upon the floor.

How Katie danced that night; square dances, round dances, dances old and new. She seemed the gayest of the gay, laughing and chatting merrily, with the group of admirers, that continually surrounded her.

"You are in high spirits to night, little one," old Peter Brown had said to her, as she sat carrying on an animated conversation with Tom Burton, who bent over her with a huge palm leaf fan.

"High spirits!" the words grated harshly upon her ear.

What would it be on the morrow when this excitement had passed away.

"A lull in the festivities—won't some one favor

us with a song; Miss Lee for instance?" asked Wilton Fairfax, coming towards her.

"O, no; excuse me please, I cannot sing to-night," she answered hurriedly. Wilton shook his finger at her.

"Now that's too bad of you, Miss Katie. Who else warbleth," he asked, turning around.

"I'll air my basso profundo," laughed Tom Burton, who could not sing a note.

Wilton held up his hand—

"Not just yet my friend; wait until we are ready to disperse, then one of your little tunes will clear the hall very quickly."

"Here, Jack," he added, turning to that young gentleman. "Come give us a song."

Jack looked up and Katie knew that his eyes were fixed upon her, although she sat looking down upon a little flower which she was idly destroying. "I do not wish to mar the memory of a pleasant evening, Fairfax."

"Why! How modest and self-depreciative we are growing all at once," laughed Wilton, slapping Templeton's back, "Come, old boy, it won't do to refuse twice. We are in the humor for such suffering as you can inflict."

Jack rose and walked to the piano

“Very well, if you are determined to be tortured,” and he sang the old, old song, Katie knew so well.

I loved a lass, a fair one,
As fair as e'er was seen ;
She was indeed a rare one,
Another Sheba queen ;
But fool as then I was,
I thought she lov'd me too,
But now, alas, she's left me.
Falero, lero, loo.

“To maidens' vows and swearing
Henceforth no credit give ;
You may give them the hearing,
But never them believe,
we are true, They are as false as fair ;
Unconstant, frail, untrue,
For mine, alas hath left me.
Falero, lero, loo.”

Katie's face was very pale as the last note died away, but when Mar's Jack rose from the piano and gave her one swift look, a bright spot burned in either cheek and her eyes gleamed defiantly. She was nervous, restless and excited. If the evening would only pass more quickly. It seemed to drag so wearily. Why didn't they break up this stupid gathering? But to all things there is an end, and at last Katie found herself bidding the guests good-night, and going up to her own room.

She did not light the lamp for her head was aching violently, and laying aside the dainty dress, she threw herself upon the bed, but only to toss to and fro. Sleep would not come. By and by she heard the door slowly open and Miss Tessy came in.

“Dear me,” Katie heard her say, “All dark—the child must have gone to sleep,” and then she heard her tip-toe to the stand and fumble about in search of a match. Then there was quite a bumping and clatter of bottles—Miss Tessy was nervous herself to-night. At last a match was struck and the lamp was lit.

Katie closed her eyes as Miss Tessy looked towards the bed. Presently she opened them a little—then wider—and at last stared outright. Miss Tessy was certainly acting very strangely to-night. Very strangely indeed. She stood looking at herself in the mirror a long time. Then she picked up the little hand-glass and turning around, attempted to get a back view of the beloved green silk and black lace head dress, touching lingeringly the cork-screw curls and smiling tenderly over her shoulder at her own image in the glass.

It was certainly very strange. Miss Tessy’s mind must be affected, and Katie fell to wondering so much over the fair one’s conduct that she forgot to

close her eyes when Miss Tessy turned around suddenly.

“O my, dear,” with a little start, “you quite frightened me for the moment ; I thought you were asleep.”

“No ’m,” answered Katie, with a little sigh, “ I can’t sleep. My head aches so dreadfully.”

Miss Tessy grew solicitous at once, for she was a very tender-hearted little body, despite her many eccentricities.

“ Head ache ? I am so sorry. Just let me slip on a loose wrapper, and I will come and bathe your head with cologne.

“ Now, my dear,” she said, shortly afterwards, seating herself by the bed, “ we will drive this ugly headache away in no time. There ! that feels better, doesn’t it ? ” placing a handkerchief, wet with cologne, about the throbbing brow.

“ Oh, yes ’m,” answered Katie, gratefully. “ You are so good, Miss Tessy ! ”

“ No, no, my dear ; not very good. You would do the same for me, I am sure ; but I ought to be good to night, my dear,” and Miss Tessy smiled and nodded mysteriously. “ I have something to tell you ; but promise you ’ll never tell. You won’t tell, will you, my dear ? ”

"No 'm," answered Katie, not knowing what else to say, and vaguely wondering what was forthcoming.

Miss Tessy sat silent a few moments, and then she leaned forward and whispered in Katie's ear :

"We 're engaged."

Katie's eyes opened wide.

"Ma'am ?"

"We 're engaged, my dear. Why don't you congratulate me?" and Miss Tessy laughed coyly.

"Who is the other one?" stammered Katie, in amazement.

Miss Tessy smiled and dropped her eyes.

"Oh, you mean the man. Why, that's Peter—I mean Mr. Brown, the Hon. Peter Brown, my dear."

Katie bit her lip and clutched at the covering. Despite the throbbing head, it was all she could do to keep her face straight. Old Peter Brown and Miss Tessy—oh, it seemed too funny!

"He's not very handsome, my dear, and there is no denying that in my younger days I might have done better; but he comes of a good old family, and is very well to do. But really, my dear, I don't think Peter—I mean Mr. Brown—would let me refuse him. He says I am perfectly indispensable to his

happiness. So I think I am doing my duty in trying to brighten his life ; don't you, my dear ? ”

“ Yes ’m,” answered Katie faintly. She dared not say much, for she was still possessed with an insane desire to laugh, and she would not have injured Miss Tessy’s feelings for all the world.

She longed to ask Miss Tessy if she would be willing to go as a missionary to the Sandwich Islands, with old Peter Brown.

“ Yes,” continued Miss Tessy, nodding her head, “ I really think I am doing my duty. I do not want to enter into anything rashly, my dear ; and I want to understand my own heart. Marriage without love, my dear, is a dreadful thing ; but I have always respected Mr. Brown, and now I think that there has grown up a quiet affection in my heart for Peter, which I hope will last through life. Yes ; I think this is the first time my heart has been deeply touched,” and she thereupon launched into a detailed account of her life, from its earliest stages down to the present time, describing vividly her numerous admirers and their impassioned declarations. “ But there, my dear,” she said, stopping suddenly at last, “ I forgot all about the headache. Are you better ? ”

“ Oh, yes ’m, thank you. I think I shall rest quietly now.”

“ Well, it is late, and we must put out the light, and both go to sleep,” said Miss Tessy, and suiting the action to the word, she blew out the light and got into bed with much more alacrity than was her wont, even forgetting—wonder of wonders—to read one of Saurin’s sermons, (so demoralizing is love.) *161*

CHAPTER XIV.

"This hour we part! My heart forboded this;
Thus everfade my fairy dreams of bliss."

BACK again to Woodburn, but not to the old happy days; they were gone forever. Back, from the gayety of Bellevue—from the careless, merry companions, very few of whom ever came into Katie's life again—to the quiet of the old homestead, which change would perhaps have been refreshing but for the feeling existing between herself and Mar's Jack. To Katie, life seemed almost unendurable. She must leave Woodburn, that was certain. She could not meet Mar's Jack, day after day, with that constraint existing between them. He was quiet and courteous, and yet, so changed from his old, merry self.

Katie longed, sometimes, to put her hand in his and ask him to forgive and to forget all; but of this Mar's Jack never dreamed. If he had—suppositions are useless, however. He thought her wholly indifferent to him—glad to be free from the bonds that were irksome to her. And a little incident that

occurred shortly after their return to Woodburn, confirmed him in his belief.

One morning, while at breakfast, they were startled by a great outcry, and Aunt Dinah came, leading, or rather, dragging Caleb into the dining-hall.

"Why, what is the matter, aunty?" questioned Mrs. Templeton.

"Matter, Miss Alice? La, dere's matter 'nuff. Dis heah imp ob Satan has done got a hold ob Miss Katie's pearl ring some way or udder, and an' I toated him heah to make him give it back. An' den," she added, turning to Caleb, "O you needn't roll up dem white eyes o' yourn; fur it's a comin' an' it's a gwine ter leab you so berry warm, young man, dat you won't keer to go near ter de stove fur a whole week."

Caleb whimpered.

"Dis heah's my ring, too, so 'tis. I foun' it, an' Mar's Jack went an' frowed it 'way from him, so it 'longs ter me. Ax him ef it don't. I picked it up outen de grass, whar we went to de pickernick onct, too, so I did."

Aunt Dinah eyed him contemptuously.

"You needn't be tryin' ter dislude dis niggah

kasen her head's all soun' ! Dat lickin's a comin'—
Heah me ?”

“Heah is yo' ring Mar's Jack.”

Jack had risen from the table. He took the little ring in his hand, and stood looking at it a few moments.

“This ring belongs to Katie,” he said in a low tone, looking down with something of the old tenderness upon the pretty brown head, and downcast eyes. “Perhaps she will take it again.”

Katie sat balancing her spoon upon the edge of her coffee cup, as though the obtaining of an even balance were a matter of the deepest import.

“Pardon me—the ring is not mine, and I do not wish it. Pearls always bring trouble you know.” How thoroughly she despised herself.

A shadow crossed Jack's face, and he set his teeth together to keep back a quick reply.

“Here is *your* ring, Caleb,” with an emphasis on the *your*, “Do not punish him, Aunt Dinah. The fault lies with me,” he added, in a low tone, fixing his eyes upon Katie, “I thought that the pearl was mine. Only one of my many mistakes, that was all,” and he left the room. And again the little ring which, at another time, would have been treasured as a sacred relic, fell into Caleb's hands.

Aunt Dinah glanced from Katie to Mrs. Templeton in astonishment.

"Now I tole yer so, mammy," said Caleb, in an injured tone, "dis heah's my ring, my lubly pearl ring," putting it on his finger, and patting it approvingly.

Then — suddenly remembering the threatened "dressing," he looked up quickly.

"Mar's Jack telled you not to lick me, mammy."

His mother made no reply. She turned slowly and left the room muttering,—“ Well I nebber. Dere's some mighty queer tings in dis heah worl'.”

Mar's Jack felt convinced now, that Katie cared nothing for him.

Katie, on her part, realized all the more strongly how unpleasant was her position at Woodburn.

"Why did papa leave me here?" she questioned over and over again—" But I won't blame papa," she would add, "for how was he to know what a stubborn wilful daughter he had."

Yes—she must go away. But where? Never mind she must go—of that she was determined. But on talking to Mrs. Templeton, she found that lady as determined as was *she*.

"You are very foolish, my child," surmising Katie's reasons for leaving Woodburn. "Your fa-

ther left you in my charge, and I will not relinquish his daughter until he comes to claim her—although she does want to run away from me.

“I may not approve of your conduct, pardon the allusion, for my son is very dear to me, but Katie,” she added gently, placing her hand under the dimpled chin, and raising Katie’s face to hers, “I know that you are very young, and have no mother to guide you child.”

There was an unwonted tenderness in Mrs. Templeton’s voice, and the quick tears sprang into the blue eyes.

“I mean to do right,” Katie said, checking a little sob, “but I always do wrong.”

Mrs. Templeton drew Katie to her side, and the reserved, stately woman became very gentle and tender. “Poor little girl,” was all she said, as she kissed the white forehead, but on that day Katie felt that she had found a mother.

She, however, was not destined to be annoyed by Mar’s Jack’s presence.

It was one evening, several days after this, that, on starting to go up stairs, she met him in the hall.

“Katie,” he said in a low tone, placing his hand on her arm to detain her.

Why did she blush so consciously, and why were

the white lids held down so firmly over the blue eyes? Katie was angry with herself.

"Katie, mother says that you want to run away from Woodburn. I know my presence is annoying to you, but I will not trouble you longer. I am going to Richmond to-morrow."

Katie's heart sank.

"Mar's Jack going to leave the old homestead," and she had driven him away.

"No, no," she cried, quickly. "You must not go."

Jack's face brightened.

"Katie, if I thought," he began, eagerly, then stopped seeing her draw back from him, "but, no, it can not be," in a low voice. "My arrangements are made. I must go. Mother thinks it will be better, for many reasons."

O, wilful Katie! One word—one look would have brought him to your side, and much of the dreariness and pain of the long weary days that followed would perhaps have been spared you both.

"I may not see you again, Katie, as I start early in the morning," Mar's Jack continued, in the same low tone. "I must say good-by to-night."

She reached out her hand, but he suddenly caught them both in his own and pressed them to his lips.

“Katie, Katie, you will never know how dearly I love you,” and the next moment he was gone. Gone, before she could reach out her arms to him and ask forgiveness. Love her? How could he love the girl who had wronged him and then had driven him from his home? How wretched and unhappy she was! Katie hurried to her own room and threw herself upon the bed in a passion of tears. There was Ruth Templeton looking down mournfully upon her from over the mantel. She almost hated the face now. The great, sad eyes seemed to watch her every movement until, at last, she arose and turned the picture to the wall. Then she sat upon the edge of the bed, fully determined to stay awake all night and watch for Mar’s Jack’s departure. A long time she sat gazing out into the night, while a thousand fancies crowded into her brain. But at last, despite repeated efforts to keep awake, the tired head drooped and Katie fell fast asleep.

So Mar’s Jack went away without even a glimpse of the pretty face at the window, although he looked back several times. Away from dear old Woodburn, with no one to say good-by or to wish him journey blessings, for he had taken leave of his mother last evening, and he would not have her disturbed.

No one—did I say? I was wrong. The ever

faithful little shadow trotted after him down the avenue, the feet encased in the red-topped boots (their glory, alas! departed). He was further adorned with a new pair of pants and a checked shirt, the sleeves of which were in constant requisition to wipe away the tears that would come, despite his efforts at manliness.

"Look here, Cabe," and Mar's Jack attempted to speak jocularly. "We shall not need any rain for a month if you dispense such copious showers."

But Caleb's tears only flowed the faster.

"Here, child, this won't do. You must not feel so badly. I am coming back again."

"Mar's J—J—Jack—my he—heart's—agwine—ter—bust," and the little fellow broke down completely

Jack felt inclined to smile, but he looked down kindly on the tearful, dusky little face. Faithful heart, full to overflowing with love for its idol. More faithful, more constant than—but he would not recall the past. He laid his hand upon Caleb's shoulder.

"Come, come, don't take it so much to heart. I told you that I was coming back again. Here is the carriage. I have a few words to say to you before

I go. If you are so fond of Mar's Jack you must do as he says. Do you hear?"

Caleb nodded.

"Well, first, you must try and be a good boy while I am away. Won't you?"

Caleb paused.

"Dat's gwine ter be a berry hard fing to do," he answered, drawing a long breath.

Jack smiled.

"I know it will be hard, but the 'hard things' are what we must conquer in this life. You will try for my sake, won't you?"

"Yes, sah," and Caleb checked another deep sigh.

"You must not run after the hens."

"I'se gotten ober dat; mammy licks too hard," interrupted Caleb, looking up with something of his old sauciness.

"And you must not let the cows out of the meadow, or go into the house with muddy feet, or tease and annoy the servants. Do you understand?"

Caleb felt very low-spirited. Mar's Jack was shortening his list of pleasures to a very great extent.

"Ef I can't do none ob dose fings I'se a gwine ter die foah you gets home," he said, disconsolately.

"O, no," said Jack, laughing. "I don't believe so. Anyhow, be as good as you can. And now, Caleb," he added, lowering his voice, "I have one more request to make of you. Do not annoy Miss Katie in any way. I want you to obey her implicitly, and be good to her, won't you?"

Caleb frowned and eyed his red-topped boots intently for a few moments.

"No, I won't, neider," he said emphatically, at last.

Mar's Jack looked astonished.

"Why, Caleb; I thought you were very fond of Miss Katie?"

"Were onct—ain't no mo'—now I hates her."

"Hate her, Caleb?"

"Yes, sah!"

"Why, what has she ever done to make you dislike her?"

"Nuffin ter me. She were mean ter you an' I hates her," he summed up, decidedly.

Mar's Jack placed both his hands upon Caleb's shoulders.

"Look up into my face, Caleb. No matter what Miss Katie may have done, remember that I love her very, very dearly. Do as I ask for my sake, won't you? Good by," and Mar's Jack sprang into the

carriage, leaving a tearful little figure looking after the rapidly disappearing vehicle. When it had entirely disappeared from view Caleb turned and trotted slowly up the avenue, saying tearfully to himself, "O, Mar's Jack, I finks I'se gwine ter die thouten you."

CHAPTER XV.

"Wait ; my faith is large in time,
And that which shapes it to some perfect end."

ONE YEAR—two years passed away. Great was the change at Woodburn. Excitement and anxiety had taken the place of the calm restfulness of other days. Every mail was watched for ; every paper was closely scanned, and every passing messenger was eagerly interrogated, for the war had broken out, and Mar's Jack (who had not returned to Woodburn since leaving) had enlisted in the Southern army.

Still, despite all this, life moved on in the same routine, and there was little to remind them of the strife that waged without. True, there was quite an excitement at the old homestead when it was announced about the third year of the war, that an encampment of soldiers was stationed about two miles to the west of them, but they only saw a few stragglers now and then.

Mrs. Templeton dreaded the sight of "those blue coats," but Katie's heart was with her country's

soldiers, while Caleb delighted in any uniform, blue or gray, and a soldier was his beau ideal of manhood.

Why was Katie at Woodburn? We have only to glance at the dark mourning robes and the pretty face, sadder, paler, but more womanly than of yore, to know that she had been left alone in the world. Her father had been lost at sea, and long and weary were the days of sickness and pain that followed the news of his death. On her recovery Mrs. Templeton would not hear of her leaving Woodburn.

“Do not desert me, Katie,” she pleaded. “My boy has gone and I am very, very lonely.” So it was that Katie remained. She had changed much in these years. The wayward, selfish girl was growing thoughtful and womanly. She was Mrs. Templeton’s main stay and support, and took most of the household care from off her hands. She had once more found her way into Caleb’s good graces, but that young gentleman did not follow her around as closely as of old. His whole time and attention were occupied with the inimitable Billy, Miss Tessy’s donkey, or rather his own donkey now. For Miss Tessy and the Hon. Peter Brown having at last consummated their mutual desire to become one, Billy had been given to Katie by the happy bride, as a token of regard, and Katie thereupon secretly transferred the

gift to Caleb. Billy was the one all-absorbing idea with that young gentleman at present, and he (Caleb) was scarcely off the donkey's back a moment. He fed, coaxed and petted him at times, and at others teased the poor little donkey so unmercifully that at last forbearance ceased to be a virtue, and Billy's hind legs flew about quite vigorously. Katie laughed merrily when Caleb asked Mrs. Templeton to send a message to Mar's Jack in one of her letters, viz: "That he usen ter be lonely thouten Mar's Jack, but now he had Miss Tessy's donkey, he didn't keer so much."

Billy had only one enemy at Bellevue, and that was Aunt Dinah, who, striking at him in an angry mood one day, had received the print of his little hoofs in her fat arm. From thenceforth she was Billy's sworn enemy, and she expressed the wish a dozen times a day, that some one would come and steal "that ugly, long-eared critter away."

A wish which was (alas, for Caleb) soon to be realized.

It was one hot day in summer, about the third year of the war, that Aunt Dinah was engaged in the useful occupation of bread-making, when she found among other things that she needed some milk. So taking up a tin quart measure she started for the

house. As she neared the side veranda, where the large chest was kept, she fancied she heard a stealthy step near the milk pans. "Am dat Caleb?" she questioned herself, tip-toeing with as little noise as her great weight would permit.

What a sight met her view!

There was one of those dreaded blue coats kneeling upon his knees, licking the cream off the milk in one of Aunt Dinah's large stone crocks. Her wrath knew no bounds, and darting forward before the unfortunate thief had time to even think, she pushed his whole head down into the crock.

"Dere, take dat fur your imperence," she cried wrathfully, "de ideah ob gwine an' stealin' de cream ob de quality, an' worsen dat, lickin' it offen de milk. Ain't yer got no manners?"

But the astonished soldier did not essay to speak. His head and face were covered with cream and little white rivulets trickled down on his blue coat.

"Ef yer wanted milk why didn't yer ax fur it an' drinken it outen a cup like white folks."

The blue coat muttered something between his teeth and began mopping himself with his handkerchief.

Aunt Dinah stood, with arms akimbo, eyeing him contemptuously,

"Now, don't yer feel nice an' comfutable? Dat's de way you's allus a gwine ter git sarved, ef yer comes a foolin' roun' me."

"What's the matter, now, aunty?" asked another soldier, coming up the veranda steps.

Aunt Dinah pointed to the delinquent.

"Matter? Dere's matter 'nuff! Dat po' white trash has been lickin' de cream off 'n de milk, an'—well, jes look at him for yo'self."

The new comer comprehended the situation at a glance, and, throwing back his head, laughed heartily.

"You are worsted in this fight, Jim, that's certain. Come, acknowledge yourself beaten, and treat for a cessation of hostilities."

The cream-colored individual, however, did not deign to reply, and, stalking angrily past his comrade, made straight for the well, where, after a good drenching, he raised a clean, but a very red and angry face.

He looked about him with an expression that meant mischief; but Satan having provided nothing there for his idle hands to do, he turned from the place, inwardly vowing vengeance upon any unfortunate creature from Woodburn, who might chance to cross his path.

As the fates would have it, he met Caleb, sitting astride Billy's back, riding up the avenue. Nearer and nearer came the unconscious pair on to their fate.

"Halt!" ordered the blue coat; and Caleb, with his blind reverence for soldiers, obeyed immediately.

"Git down off that animal, sir."

Caleb did not seem disposed to mind this second command, but seeing the gleaming bayonet, he concluded that discretion was the better part of valor, and dismounted; at which the soldier leaped upon Billy's back and rode away, before Caleb had even time to so much as wink.

At first the little fellow stood looking about him in a dazed way, speechless with indignation and surprise; then he turned suddenly and darted after the rapidly disappearing donkey, crying:

"O Billy, Billy! Dey's done tookeen my las' comfut 'way fromed me!"

Down, down the dusty road ran the little feet. The donkey was out of sight now, but Caleb trotted on until the camp appeared to view. Here he paused with an awed feeling.

"So many tents, and so many sojers!"

How was he ever to recover the beloved Billy?

Go forward, he dared not; retreat, he would not. Caleb was in a quandary.

“ Well, Caleb, what do you want ? ” and looking up, he saw the handsome face of young Ashely.

He started as if to run away, remembering that Ashely had old scores to settle, but a reassuring hand was laid upon his arm.

“ Don’t be frightened, ” said Ashely, smiling. “ I do not bear you any grudge. What’s the matter ? Anything wrong at Woodburn ? ”

“ No, sah. Dey is all right dah ; but, oh, I wants Billy. ”

“ Who is Billy ; your brother ? ”

Caleb shook his head.

“ No, he ain’t ’zackly my brudder ; he’s a donkey. ”

Ashely laughed.

“ Some relative, I suppose. Well, what about your donkey ? Where is he ? ”

Caleb drew a long breath.

“ Dat’s what I wants ter know. One ob yo’ sojer men tooked him ’way fromed me, an’ I ain’t seed him since. Please ter git him fur me, Mar’s Ashely, ’kasen he’s all de comfut I’s got sence Mar’s Jack went ’way ter be a sojer. ”

Ashely looked up, after a pause.

“So your master is in the army? Who are left at Woodburn?”

“Oh, all ob us—same as eber. Miss Alice, Miss Katie and de servants.”

“Katie—Miss Lee—is she at Woodburn, now?”

Caleb nodded.

“Oh, yes, sah; course she stays dah, 'kase her fader's dead, an' she hain't got no place else ter go, I reckon. We couldn't get 'long 'thouten Miss Katie.”

“I do not doubt it,” said Ashely, in a low tone, speaking as if to himself.

“But Billy,” put in Caleb, coming back to the subject which was uppermost in his thoughts, “you tole me you 'd help me fin' Billy; won't yer, please, Mar's Ashely?”

Ashely stood looking down upon the ground in an absent, pre-occupied way. Katie was still at Woodburn; then all must be “well” between herself and Templeton.

“Won't yer, please, Mar's Ashely?”

Ashely raised his head.

“What did you say, Caleb?”

“I wants Billy.”

“Oh, yes,” said Ashely, laughing; “well, come

with me, and I will see if I can not restore the beloved Billy to your arms."

The story spread throughout the camp, and soon, thanks to Ashely, Caleb was happy in the possession of Billy once more.

"You 'members what Billy dis is, Mar's Ashely?" he said, standing with his arms clasped around the donkey's neck. "Miss Tessy gib dis donkey ter us."

Ashely scrutinized Billy closely, for a few moments.

"Well, I believe I do recognize that benign countenance. How did Miss Tessy ever come to part with so valuable an article?"

"Oh, she gotten married to dat man wid dat so awfully great big nose on his face."

"Old Peter Brown and Miss Tessy. Will wonders never cease?" And Ashely laughed immoderately.

"Well, I mus' be goin' home, kasen mammy 'ill be wonderin' whar I is," said Caleb, at last.

"Mar's Ashely," he added, turning around as he was about to mount the well beloved, and speaking hesitatingly, "I is so berry much obliged, an' I'se awful sorry I done hitted you onct, an' I likes you berry much, mos' as well's Mar's Jack. I clar foah gracious I do."

Ashely smiled.

"Even if I do wear a blue coat, and he wears a gray; never mind the past, Caleb. We are friends now. Are we not?"

Caleb nodded his head vigorously.

"'Deed we is, an' I likes you berry, awfully much, too," and so saying, he mounted Billy and rode away with a much lighter heart than he had brought into camp.

He found Katie waiting for him on his return.

"Come, Caleb, I want you to drive over to Bellevue with me. I am going to bring Jessie Fairfax back to Woodburn," and Caleb, after disposing of Billy, jumped into the buggy beside her.

"I dunno's we ought to go up dah, Miss Katie," he said, as they were riding along.

"Why, child?"

"'Kase some sojer mans might take de horse an' buggy 'way from us," remembering the episode with Billy.

"Perhaps it is rather rash in me to drive about so much alone," said Katie, reflectively, "but I do want to see Jessie so much."

"A sojer man went an' took Billy 'way fromed me. But some one getted him back agin, an' some one you knowed too, Miss Katie."

Katie looked up wonderingly.

"Some one I know?"

"Yes'm."

"Who is it?"

"Dat man w'at usen ter paint pictures, Mar's Ashely," and Caleb gave a sidelong glance to see how his communication would be received.

The pale face grew suddenly crimson. But she said, very quietly: "Tell me the story, won't you, Caleb?" And he forthwith began to relate his grievances at full length, dwelling upon Ashely's kindness to him.

"He's a berry nice man too, an' I'se awfully sorry I done hitted him onct, so I is." Here he gave another sidelong glance at Katie.

"It is a lovely day to drive, isn't it, Caleb?" Katie seemed anxious to change the subject.

"O, berry nice. Mar's Jack don't like Mar's Ashely berry much, does he?"

"Here comes a soldier on horseback, Caleb. I wonder who it can be," again anxious to change the subject; but fate was against her.

"I clar foah gracious, ef it ain't Mar's Ashely," exclaimed Caleb, eagerly, while Katie was guilty of her old habit of blushing crimson, as she recognized the slight, well-built figure and handsome face.

He merely lifted his hat in passing, but suddenly reined in his horse and came up by the side of the buggy.

"Pardon me, Miss Lee, but I do not think it at all safe for you to ride with no one but this little fellow as an escort. I hope I do not intrude myself upon you."

"Certainly not," striving to appear self-possessed. "Perhaps I should not have ventured out, but I was very anxious to go to Bellevue."

"May I act as your escort, Miss Lee? I am sorry, for your sake, but I must repeat that I do not consider it at all safe for you to go alone."

"Certainly. Thank you. You are very kind," she answered, quietly, and he rode along by the buggy, talking of the one and only topic discussed at that time, viz: the "War," until they reached Bellevue. Then, declining Katie's invitation to call there, he rode away.

Jessie Fairfax's delight knew no bounds.

"O, you dear girl! I am so glad to see you," drawing Katie down on the sofa beside her. "I shall be delighted to come over to Woodburn."

"You don't know how lonely I have been," she continued, lowering her voice. "You know, don't you, Katie," and the bright eyes filled with tears.

Katie glanced down at Jessie's black dress.

"Yes, Mr. Templeton told us in his letter," she said, gently. "Poor Wilton!"

"It was so sudden, Katie," continued Jessie, in low, broken tones. "We received a letter written in his old joking way, giving us a laughable account of camp life, so bright and so like himself. A few days after came a letter from one of his comrades telling us that he was dead. O, Katie! It was so dreadful, and I loved him so dearly," and Jessie broke down completely.

A soft, white arm stole round her neck.

"I know how hard it was, Jessie, dear, for—" and Katie's lips quivered. "You know I am all alone in the world now."

Jessie drew the brown head down upon her bosom, and they sat very quietly talking together for a long time, each finding comfort in sympathizing with the sorrow of the other.

"There, I didn't mean to make your visit a sad one, Katie, dear," said Jessie at last. "Come upstairs while I pack a few things in the satchel."

It was when Jessie began to dress that Katie first noticed a tiny gold locket on a slender chain about her neck.

"Whose picture do you keep so secluded?" she

asked, roguishly, catching hold of the locket; but the dark face colored so painfully that she felt sorry that she had spoken of it.

“No, no! Don’t open it please,” said Jessie, hurriedly, seizing hold of the locket, which came unclasped and a little picture fell to the ground. Jessie snatched it up quickly, but not before Katie had recognized the face—Ashely’s.

Could it be that Jessie loved him? Then all her foolish jealousy had been wholly unfounded. She might have known that Jessie regarded Mar’s Jack almost in the light of a brother. Yes, she had been very foolish. But did Jessie love Ashely? She looked at the tall, graceful girl, and wondered why Ashely had loved her own wayward little self. What could be done?

And the brown head set about devising a scheme. She would invite Ashely to Woodburn, and manage to leave him with Jessie as much as possible. Yes, Ashely must fall in love with Jessie. Some good must come from her own wrong doing. And with her head full of bright conspiracies she followed unsuspecting Jessie down stairs and, went to find Caleb, who (after much searching) was discovered in the henhouse, into mischief as usual. He had not improved in these years.

CHAPTER XVI.

"O, my soul's joy!

If after every tempest come such calms,

May the winds blow till they have wakened death!"

KATIE feared that her scheme would prove futile, for, although, after the first invitation, Ashely called at Woodburn several times, he seemed to make no headway as far as Jessie was concerned. Katie herself avoided him as much as possible, however, until one day, on meeting her in the hall, he laid his hand upon her arm and said in a low tone:

"Why do you always seek to avoid me, Katie?"

She blushed consciously, but made no reply.

"I should not have annoyed you with my presence again, Katie, but you seemed so urgent that I should call. Will you not at least regard me as a friend?"

She reached out her hand. "It is very good of you to even care for my friendship," she said, humbly; "I have deeply repented my own folly. Can you forgive me, Mr. Ashely?"

He caught both her hands in his.

"Katie—if I thought— Were you mistaken after all?"

“No, No!” she cried, drawing from him quickly, “I do not mean that. My answer is now what it was then,” she added gently, but firmly. “I only ask to be forgiven for my deceit; for my utter unworthiness. I respect and admire you, Mr. Ashely, but there—let us not draw back the veil that covers the past, for your sake and for mine.”

He was standing with bowed head.

“I must not come here again,” speaking slowly, as if to himself; “it is only opening the old wound afresh.”

“Yes, you must come,” she cried, quickly, thinking of Jessie—“that is, Mr. Ashely,” coming up to his side and speaking in a low tone, “do you not know that there is another whom you might love, and who loves you?”

The opening of the hall door startled them both.

“O, I beg your pardon,” and Jessie Fairfax retreated precipitately.

“Do you want anything, Jessie?” asked Katie, coming toward her.

“No—that is, I was looking for my gold locket, I can’t find it any where.”

“We will help you look for it. Come, Mr. Ashely,” and a grand search was made, but the locket remained obstinately out of sight, until, at last,

Ashely was compelled to take his departure without having aided Miss Fairfax in the least.

He puzzled much over Katie's question, as he walked slowly down the avenue.

"Another whom he might love, and who loved him ;" what did she mean ?

"No, there was none other but Katie's bright little self who could creep into his heart and take possession there. He had thought the old wound healed, but it bled afresh on seeing her again.

"Another ?" No, that could never be.

Just then his eyes caught sight of something bright shining on the ground. What could it be ? A little gold locket. He stooped and picked it up. Perhaps it was Katie's. His thoughts always reverted first to her. Then he suddenly remembered Jessie's worry over her lost locket. How stupid of him ! of course it belonged to Miss Fairfax. He would carry it back to her. What a pretty little locket it was ? blue enameled. He wondered whose picture was inside. Perhaps Templeton's. He always thought that she had a weakness for that fellow, and he unclasped the locket.

Had the skies fallen ?

He stood staring at his own handsome face in blank dismay. What did it mean ? His picture—

where did she get it? What did she want with it? Then suddenly Katie's words came to him—"Perhaps there is another who loves you."

"Did she mean Jessie Fairfax?" Yes, that was the only solution to her mysterious words.

Well! A man was never too old to learn, that was certain. And a great revelation had come to him this afternoon. Not an altogether disagreeable one, either, for the knowledge that he was loved by a young and handsome girl, was not altogether unpleasant. But, what should he do with the locket?

Return it? No—that would be very mortifying to her. So slipping it into his pocket, he turned from Woodburn musing deeply.

It was one evening in the latter part of October, that Ashely found himself again at Woodburn.

Jessie Fairfax was singing, and as he looked at the graceful figure, and pretty, shapely head, he felt a new interest awakened within him.

He stood leaning on the piano turning the music leaves, and he saw the rich flush come into her cheek, as their eyes met, and her's fell before his gaze.

"Please sing this, Miss Jessie. It is an old favorite of mine."

She rose quickly from the stool.

"Excuse me, I am tired now," she said, walking over to the window.

Ashely was surprised. Perhaps he had been mistaken, after all. She was always reserved with him.

He was becoming interested.

"Perhaps you will take a walk with me, Miss Jessie?" and he came and stood by her side.

The beautiful, dark eyes brightened, but again the stubborn heart impelled her to utterance.

"I would rather not, thank you. The evenings are so chilly."

He felt slightly piqued, and yet somewhat amused.

"I think I have your secret now, my lady," he thought exultantly, "I will find out if I am right."

"Won't you go with me, Jessie?" looking down into her eyes.

Again the rich flush in her cheek. But she gave a little toss of her head, as if to recover from her embarrassment.

"O, I suppose so, if you wish," she said carelessly, avoiding his gaze. "I will run and get a shawl," and she hurriedly left the room.

Ashely drew back the heavy red curtains, and stood looking out upon the lawn. He saw not the

beauty of the October afternoon — his thoughts were busy with himself. Was he fickle?

No—stability was a virtue, if so it may be called, upon which he had prided himself.

And yet he felt a deep interest in Jessie Fairfax. It must be only a passing interest, because *true love* comes but once in a life time, and he had given that true love to Katie. He had declared to himself, when Katie had wronged him, that it was not in woman to be true—changeable as the wind that blows! And yet he had felt his heart warm towards Katie, on seeing her again, in her sweet womanliness. And, here was this new interest in Jessie Fairfax. Well! He did not understand himself, that was certain, and turning from the window, he saw Jessie Fairfax standing in the doorway.

How pretty she looked in her little mourning bonnet, with the long crape veil, and the black wrap that so well became the graceful figure.

Truly, she was a girl to be admired as well as loved.

“I beg your pardon for keeping you waiting such a length of time,” she said apologetically, with a bright smile.

“I am fully repaid *now* Miss Jessie, for the mo-

ments spent without you," and with a bow he offered her his arm.

Katie peeping out of the window, shortly afterwards, saw them walking slowly, apparently in close conversation.

She rejoiced for Jessie's sake and yet, woman-like, she felt slightly piqued at Ashely.

But a short time ago he had shown by his every look, that he still cared for her, and here he was all absorbed in Jessie. Well,

Men
"Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never."

Not one of them could be trusted. Except, perhaps—how her heart went out after Mar's Jack. How shamefully she had treated him, and he was so good, so noble and so true. She had broken his heart, and had driven him from his home. If she could only go back and live over those days: "If" is such a little word, but it means so much.

How dearly had she paid for her folly! She glanced at her pale face in the mirror. Mar's Jack would not fall in love with her again. She had lost all of her old beauty. Was this the same bright girl who had been so happy in those days that seemed so long—so very long ago?

She remembered their ride one night, and how she had told Mar's Jack that she wondered why she was so happy, when there was so much misery in the world.

Now, trouble had come into her life, but she had brought it all upon herself. She could bear it better, she thought, if it had not been occasioned by her own folly.

We always think that we can bear just what doesn't fall to our lot.

Perhaps the severer the school in which we learn, the stronger and truer will we be.

Katie rested her chin upon her hands, and surveyed herself sorrowfully.

"O Katie Lee! I never, never thought you could be so unhappy," she said to herself, while two big tears rolled down her cheeks. "Is there no more sunshine for you? There, I must not be so silly," she added, after a pause, wiping away her tears. "I think I will take a walk; perhaps that will brighten my spirits a little," and she went down stairs to find Caleb.

The little fellow was very mysterious this afternoon. He smiled frequently to himself, and seemed very anxious to lead Katie in the direction of the old church.

Katie could not understand it.

"What is the matter with you, child?"

"Oh, nuffin', Miss Katie. Don' you wish you could see Mar's Jack?"

See Mar's Jack? After three long, dreary years, oh, what would she not give to see him?

"Indeed, indeed, I do, Caleb!"

"You wasn't bery good ter him onct."

Caleb had not quite forgiven Katie yet.

She shook her head mournfully.

Proud, wilful Katie was growing very humble.

"No, child; I wronged him deeply," she said, in a low tone.

Caleb came nearer, and looked up into her face.

"You's sorry now, ain't yer?"

"I can not tell *how sorry*, Caleb."

He seemed satisfied, and trotted along beside Katie, with a brighter face than he had worn for a long time. When they reached the old building, he did not seem disposed to linger in the graveyard, as Katie was always fond of doing, but hurried her into the church.

"Miss Katie, don' you wish *awfully* much dat you could see Mar's Jack?" asked Caleb again, as he seated himself on the pulpit steps and began to swing his feet back and forth. "Wouldn't it be

nice ter see him jest right now?" and he looked into her face, with eyes brimming over with some weighty secret.

Oh, why did he probe the old wound?

"I would like very, very much to see him, Caleb!"

"An' you lubs him same as eber?"

Katie stood leaning against the pulpit, and the pretty head was bowed.

"Love him? I love him a thousand times more than before. Oh, how I have repented my own wrong doing!" she said plaintively, speaking as if to herself. "If he were only, only here, to say that he forgave me, I would be happy. O Mar's Jack! I am so, so wretched without you!" and she buried her face in her hands.

Was that a step behind her? She turned quickly, and the next moment was clasped in two loving arms, and a pale, worn, but dearly-loved face bent over her.

"My own little darling!" Jack cried, "*mine, mine* forever, now."

The shock was too great for her, and she lay motionless in his arms.

"O Caleb! I have killed her! Run quickly — some water!" but the white lids slowly opened and

the blue eyes stared vacantly at first ; then growing brighter and brighter until a perfect peace rested in their depths.

“ Mar’s Jack, do you really love me ? ” she whispered at last.

“ Love you, my life ? ” and he clasped her to his breast.

“ After—after all I have done ? ”

He laid his finger upon her lips.

“ Hush ! not one word of the past. We live in the present, my darling,” and he drew her down on a seat beside him.

She nestled closely at his side. The sunshine was coming back into her life.

“ O my dear Mar’s Jack, I have been so unhappy without you ! and I am so, so happy now ! ”

He smiled tenderly down into the blue eyes.

“ I too have carried a very heavy heart, Katie ; but we will not talk of the old life. You are mine now, and nothing but death shall separate us.”

She sat restful and happy a while, then her woman’s curiosity got the better of her.

“ But what are you doing here, Mar’s Jack ? ”

“ I am an escaped prisoner, child, and have been hiding here two days in the hopes of seeing you, with only Caleb in the secret. He gave me a detailed

account of home life and my dear ones. By-the-by, Katie, you must not even hint this to mother, as it would only give her fresh cause for anxiety. I must get away as soon as possible, and you must be very careful about coming here, child."

"Some little romance in our lives, after all," she said, smiling, rather sadly.

"Not very romantic, but horribly lonely and disagreeable," answered Jack, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Spiders and mice are not very enviable companions. Caleb, however, is the only ghost I've seen."

"I'se been a takin' keer of Mar's Jack, sence I foun' 'im. Heah's some crackers I done sabed fur you from my dinner, Mar's Jack," and Caleb forthwith proceeded to take them from his shirt bosom.

"Lo! How are the mighty fallen!" laughed Jack, in something of his old merry way.

Katie drew back in horror.

"You are surely not going to eat those crackers, Mar's Jack?"

"O, no! not at all," and Jack proceed to dispose of them quite vigorously. "A man is not very choice when he has had nothing to eat for several days, Katie."

She grew compassionate at once.

"You poor boy! I will bring you a lunch every day. You are getting thin, Mar's Jack," she added, pityingly, touching the hollows in his cheeks.

He raised her face to his.

"You are changed, too, Katie, very, very much, and yet, do you know," with great tenderness, "your face is far lovelier to me now than it was in the old days."

A pleased surprise came into her eyes so blue.

"Am I, Mar's Jack? I thought I was growing very ugly. But I don't care one bit, so *you* love me."

He drew her close to him and they sat so silent and so happy—so inexpressibly happy.

"Mar's Jack," whispered Katie, after a pause, remembering her talk with Cad Nelson, "I love you so dearly now, that I would even go as a missionary to the Sandwich Islands, if you wanted to go."

Jack laughed.

"I don't think I shall ever make such a request, Kit. But," changing his tone, "you are a soldier's love now, Katie, and I shall ask you to be a brave little woman, until I come to claim you."

"I'll try," she whispered, tremulously, and again she nestled close to his side and they sat very silent, Caleb meanwhile wondering what happiness people

could find in sitting still and gazing into each other's faces.

"Dis heah am a funny worl'," he mused; "I wonder ef all de folks what lubs each udder allus does dat a way. I'd jes' like ter see my pappy set an' look into my mammy's face liken dat, onct," and Caleb chuckled over the idea. "Lawd! She'd turn roun' quicker'n wink and she'd say, 'Now what am you a settin' dah an' a gapin' in my face fûr? you ole idjut you.' 'Deed she would, but I spec's eberybody acts different."

"Well, Katie, little girl," said Jack, at last, "it is growing late, and I do not like you to be out after dark in these troublous times. Be careful about coming here again, my darling."

"Take good care of her, Caleb," he added, as he kissed Katie good-by.

"O, she's berry safe wid me," and Caleb walked along at Katie's side with the air of a Sir Knight.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Hope on, hope ever! though to-day be dark,
The sweet sunburst may smile on thee to-morrow."

KATIE tripped about the house with something of her old gayety the next morning. Every now and then the sweet voice broke forth into song, and the merry laugh rang through the old halls.

"Why, Katie, you are quite yourself this morning. What good angel has wrought this effect?" asked Jessie Fairfax, coming into the library.

Katie was dusting the music rack.

"O, I don't know," she said, gaily, flourishing her duster over her head, "Only I feel dreadfully, alarmingly happy," and she seated herself at the piano and sang,

"Life is all sunshine ;
No darkness is here."

"I wish you would give me the recipe," sighed Jessie, enviously.

Katie looked up with surprise.

"Are you unhappy, Jessie?"

The dark head drooped. "If to love where no

love is returned, is unhappiness, then I am most miserable." X

Two soft arms, those comforting arms, stole about her neck.

"Jessie, darling, don't be despondent. Perhaps he loves you."

Jessie shook her head. "No, and it is very galling to me, but I cannot help loving him, and for me to love once is to love forever. You will think I have no pride, Katie, but I must talk to some one. O, child, if my burden were anything else, rather than this, I could bear it," and the dark eyes filled with tears.

Katie nestled closely at Jessie's side. She remembered how the same thought had come to her.

"We all have something to bear, Jessie, dear. Perhaps your burden is the best for you. I cannot tell what is right for you, dear, for I am so unlovable, and so selfish, myself, but I think if we are patient, and push on bravely to the end, some light will shine across the pathway, dark though it may seem now.

"There! I am a regular old grandmother, am I not," she added, laughing through the tears that came in sympathy with Jessie's.

Jessie kissed her warmly.

"No, my darling, you are a regular little comforter. But I must go to my sewing now. What are you going to do? Come up and read to me."

"I will, after a while Jessie. I have an errand to do," and a very pleasant errand it seemed to be, for Katie looked very bright, as she tripped away an hour afterward, with a lunch basket on her arm.

She found Mar's Jack in a very hungry condition.

"Now just eat and eat," she said gaily, spreading out the dinner on the pulpit. "We will mete out something beside spiritual food from this old pulpit to-day."

Jack laughed.

"Yes, for I hardly think spiritual food would supply my demand at present. Now, Kit, I am going to 'fall to,' with a vengeance."

And he did "fall to" with such vigor that Katie wanted to know if he intended to leave the pulpit.

"Well" said Jack at last, "I feel like a new man, Katie. You don't know how dreadfully hungry and lonely I have been for the last two or three days. It does all very well to read about, but the romance disappears in real life, my dear."

"Now Katie," he added, after a time, seating

himself in one of the pews, and drawing her down by his side, "Let us have a long, long talk."

* * * * *

Meanwhile Jessie Fairfax sat with Mrs. Templeton, talking and sewing.

"Where is Katie?" asked Mrs. Templeton, looking up from the stocking she was darning.

"I don't know. She said she had an errand to do," answered Jessie, holding her needle to the light, in order to thread it. "She went out about an hour ago."

Mrs. Templeton shook her head.

"It is not safe for her to run about alone, as she does. I must put a stop to it at once. There are so many of those dreadful soldiers about. Why, I do believe there are some now."

Raising her eyes, Jessie saw several "blue coats" coming down the road.

"What can it mean? Go down and see, child."

Jessie ran down stairs, but Caleb was there before her.

"Dese heah sojers said dat somebody war hid in dis hous', Miss Jessie."

Jessie turned pale.

"Some one hidden in this house. You are mistaken."

"I beg your pardon, miss," said the foremost soldier, lifting his cap, "but we have orders to examine the premises."

"The idea of any one being hidden in this house. Why we haven't seen any body who would be likely to hide here, for an age."

"Can't help it miss. We have our orders."

"O, very well, search all you want too. Caleb can show you around, I won't," and Jessie went up stairs, highly indignant at the bare supposition that any one should be concealed at Woodburn.

Caleb was delighted, and fairly danced before them.

"Come 'long now, an' hunt roun'. Heah's de liberry. No one's in heah. See—under de pianner an' in de closet, an' in de fire place," and he made them look into every crevice. Even opening a large match safe, and holding a huge vase for their inspection.

"He would not be in there unless he had been cremated," laughed the foremost soldier, who seemed to be a very pleasant, good natured sort of a chap, "and we don't care about his ashes. Come on. He's not in here."

Down the long hall went Caleb, followed by a line of blue coats; into the drawing room,

around on the veranda, up into all the bedrooms, leading them into all sorts of uncomfortable places, and letting them extricate themselves as best they could. At last they reached a small door in a dark end of the upper hall.

Caleb planted himself before it.

"You can't go in heah," he said, looking up with a determined air.

"You are as brave as the three hundred Spartans," laughed the good natured soldier. "How do you expect to keep us out?"

"Well—you kin go eberywhar else but dis place. I shan't let yer go in heah."

The other soldiers were becoming impatient.

"Don't fool with that imp any longer," growled Caleb's old enemy, with the creamy history.

"Billy ain't in heah," grinned Caleb, maliciously.

This raised the laugh against Caleb's enemy, who frowned ominously.

"Come move off now, youngster," said one, at last.

"I can't let you go in heah, honest I can't," and Caleb looked very mysterious.

Matters were becoming serious.

"If you don't move from that door you will have the action done for you. Understand?"

Caleb, with a deep sigh, moved away.

"Berry well. Ef you mus' go in dar I'll tell Miss Katie 'twan't my fault."

And he opened the door very cautiously.

The soldiers peered eagerly into the long, dark closet.

It was empty.

"Te hee!" and Caleb darted away, laughing immoderately at his deception.

"Well, we are outwitted this time," laughed the good-natured soldier. "He's not here, that's certain. Is there any other hiding place near here?"

"There is an old empty church about a half a mile from here, I think," said one.

"The very place. We'll look about the grounds first," and they started down stairs.

Katie met them in the hallway. Her face turned pale, but she greeted them with a smile and they lifted their caps respectfully.

"Caleb," she whispered, "what does this mean?" And the little fellow explained matters.

"I dunno, Miss Katie, but I rather 'spect its Mar's Jack dey is lookin' arter. O, didn't I fool 'em nice," and he rolled over on the floor in his joy.

The soldiers gave him some black looks, but he leered defiantly and trotted away.

“That is a true imp of Satan. Well, come on and let’s search the grounds and then for the old church, boys.”

Katie turned deadly pale.

The old church! and Mar’s Jack was there. They would take him prisoner. What could she do?

“Well, Katie, are you here at last?” called Jessie, looking over the stairway. “What a time we’ve had. Those stupid soldiers thought that some was hidden in this house. Did you ever hear of anything as silly? Do come—”

But Katie did not stop to hear the rest of the sentence. She rushed through the hall-way and down the steps out into the chill October evening. O, if she should be too late! And the thought lent wings to the flying feet. On—on down the road, the wind blowing the pretty hair all about her face. “She must save Mar’s Jack,” and the feet flew faster. How far away the old church was? The distance had never seemed so great before. Would she ever reach it? Yes, there it was, and bursting open the door, she cried,

“Quick, Mar’s Jack! run, they are coming after you.”

“Why, my darling, what’s the matter?” And he held the trembling form in his arms.

"O, Mar's Jack, they are searching for you. They have just been to the house and they are coming here."

"Mar's Jack," said a voice, and they both started at finding Caleb near them.

"Quick! yer hain't got no time eben ter kiss Miss Katie. De sojers is a comin.' Heah's Billy fur yer to ride."

"O, ye powers that be," ejaculated his master, laughing, in spite of himself; "Billy, of all things; there is no possible danger of my being overtaken," he added, ironically.

Caleb's face fell.

"Well, Billy were de only fmg I had ter gib yer," he said, humbly.

Jack patted Caleb's head.

"Never mind, you did the best you could. Billy may redeem his character after all. But I must be off now," and kissing Katie hurriedly, he darted through the doorway and disappeared from view. While Katie and Caleb, taking a short cut through the woods, reached Woodburn without having been discovered.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Gather ye rosebuds, while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying,
And this same flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow will be dying.

("Then be not coy, but use your time,
And while ye may, go marry:
For having lost but once your prime,
You may forever tarry."

JESSIE FAIRFAX sat in front of the grate, with the brilliant dark eyes fixed upon the fitful fire-light. Mrs. Templeton was not feeling well and Katie was waiting upon her, so Jessie sat alone.

It was her last afternoon at Woodburn and her heart was heavy, heavier than ever before, for she had grown to love Ashely very dearly in these last few months, and her love seemed hopeless, utterly hopeless. Why did he not return her love? Ah! why? the one question we ask and ask again.

There was Katie, so bright and so happy and *she* so miserable.

Things were very unequally divided in this world. If she could forget him. But no, that was impossible, and she sighed deeply.

A step in the hall, then the door opened softly.

“What, all alone Miss Jessie?” and the telltale color flamed into her cheek at the voice.

“The wind is blowing a regular tornado out of doors. Just listen,” and he stopped with his hand upon the knob, listening to the wind that sobbed and moaned like a lost child, about the old house.

“You look comfortable here, though,” he added, drawing an easy chair up by the fire. “May I keep you company? A penny for your thoughts, Miss Jessie.”

She sat looking into the fire.

“They would be worth nothing to you,” she said, with a little, bitter laugh.

“Perhaps they would, Miss Jessie ; at least, give me an opportunity to judge.”

She raised the dark eyes to his face.

“I was thinking that my whole life had been a mistake—utterly worthless and useless.”

Ashely smiled.

“I have heard of ugly, cross old fellows being misanthropes, but a beautiful young girl—that is something quite beyond me. You have lived such a great number of years, Miss Jessie, that I should think you would feel that your life had been wasted,” and he glanced at her, with an amused look.

She looked annoyed.

“Oh, you may laugh, if you wish, but I feel in that way, nevertheless. I have nothing left to live for.”

“Your life, useless, worthless, Miss Jessie? Nonsense! Let me draw you a picture in the firelight,” he added, speaking in a low, earnest tone, and fastening his eyes upon the fire. “I see a long, low room, brightened with the firelight glow. There is a lovely girl seated in a large red arm-chair. What a pretty picture she makes, with the bright light falling on the sweet face and the dark, earnest eyes! Near her sits an insignificant-looking customer, who thinks *himself* very important, no doubt, but whose eyes, nevertheless, will wander towards the graceful figure in the arm-chair. He thought once that he could never love again; but every day he has watched this lovely girl, and every day she has grown dearer and dearer to him. And yet, despite all that, this young girl says that her life is utterly worthless and useless. She has only to turn to this insignificant-looking fellow in the arm-chair, to know that it is worth all the world to him. Jessie —” and he rose and came to her chair.

Could she believe her own ears?

The beautiful head drooped lower and lower.

“Jessie,” and he lifted her towards him, “you

are the one girl, in all the world, for me! Is your life worthless now, darling? I can not offer you much, but you can make me very happy! Mine—always—Jessie?”

Slowly the dark eyes were raised to his face.

“Yes,” she whispered, and he folded her to his breast.

The library door opened suddenly.

“Oh, for goodness sake!” exclaimed Katie, in astonishment, beating a quick retreat. “Quite good evidence that my plans have succeeded,” she said, exultantly; “but how silly they looked, when I opened the door,” and she laughed, in spite of herself. “I suppose it is very nice when it is yourself; but it does look awfully silly in other people. Hush!” she whispered, as Caleb came up the hall. “Don’t go in there!”

Caleb became curious.

“What’s in dah?”

“Hush!” and Katie held up a warning finger. “Don’t talk so loud. They will hear you, and then it might never come off.”

Caleb put his head upon one side, and stared at Katie. Her troubles must have affected her brain. Then, becoming curious again:

“What’s in dah?”

“Hush! I tell you. Don’t look in for all the world. Come with me,” and Katie tiptoed down the hall, followed slowly by Caleb.

As soon as she was out of sight, however, he trotted back and stood in front of the door. His fingers fairly itched to open it. What was in there? Would it hurt, if he would take one peep—just one? and glancing up and down the hall again, Caleb took hold of the knob and turned it softly. Then he peeped in cautiously.

There sat Ashely and Jessie, side by side, in front of the fire, her head resting upon his shoulder, and he breathing soft nothings into her ear.

“Te hee!” and the door slammed violently.

Caleb trotted away with contempt.

“Miss Katie done make an awful fuss ober dat! Why, dat’s a goin’ on in dis house all de time. Miss Katie can’t say nuffin’, ’kase I seed her act dat away lots ob times herself. I mus’ gitten me a bo fur me. Say, mammy,” coming to the kitchen where Aunt Dinah was washing, “can’t you gitten me a bo fur me?”

Aunt Dinah looked up from the suds.

“Gitten you a what?”

“A bo—a gal fur me ter lub, mammy.”

Aunt Dinah put her arms akimbo.

"I kin gitten you a ledder strap ter lickin de skin offen you, ef you wants it."

And Caleb, with a grin, trotted away. He rolled around on the bare ground for a while, utterly regardless of the wind and the cold. It was very lonesome at Woodburn now. He used to have Billy once.

"Oh, Billy were such a comfut to me," he mused, "so sociable and nice."

Billy's few virtues grew, and grew into mountains of goodness, now that he was gone.

"O Billy, Billy! what wouldn't I gib ter see you?" and Caleb heaved a deep sigh.

Then he thought he heard the sound of horses' hoofs. What was that coming down the road? Caleb got up and peeped through the fence rails. May be it was a horse. No; it looked like a donkey—and—Caleb made no more conjectures, but leaping over the fence, dashed down the road at full speed, meeting the long lost Billy half way.

"O Billy, Billy," he cried, hugging the donkey affectionately, "ef yer hain't come home ter me! I were lookin' fur a bo, Billy, an' you's my bo, sho' as you's born! I ain't glad ter see yer, is I? Oh, no!" and he bestowed another token of affection upon the donkey's neck.

Billy rubbed his nose against Caleb's arm, and seemed equally delighted.

"A pair of 'em," Mar's Jack would have said.

"Yes, you 's my bo, Billy; better 'n dem silly gals fur bos, too. But how did you gitten here?" he asked, as though he fully expected a reply.

Billy brayed.

Caleb shook his head.

"I don' jes' know what you says, but I 'spect it's all right. Ain't you dirty, do'? I 'clar foah gracious, you 's jes' like a pig. Come up ter de stable an' git cleaned, an' den you shall hab sumfin' ter eat."

If Billy could not talk, he certainly seemed to understand when he was spoken to, for he started into a brisk trot at the mention of food.

"Mammy," said Caleb, stopping at the kitchen door, "heah 's Billy!"

Aunt Dinah's face assumed a disgusted expression.

"De Lawd o' mussy! am dat imp come back again? I fought we'd got rid ob him fur sho'. Tooken him right 'way from heah! Ef dere 's anyt'ing I hates, it am dat Billy!"

Caleb grinned maliciously.

"It's his hin' legs you hates, mammy, not him."

“ You git ’way from heah wid yer sass, or dat ledder strap’s a gwine ter fly roun’ pretty briskly ! Heah me ? ”

And Caleb, taking the very broad hint, walked away to attend to the wants of the well-beloved.

CHAPTER XIX.

EXIT CALEB.

Oh, say not woman's false as fair,
That like the bee she ranges,
Still seeking flowers more sweet and rare,
As fickle fancy changes!
Ah, no! the love that first can warm,
Will leave her bosom never;
No second passion e'er can charm;
She loves, and loves forever."

GREAT was the excitement at Woodburn. Mar's Jack was coming home. He had remained in Richmond several months after the close of the war, but now he was coming back to them again after his long years of absence.

The inmates of Woodburn (which, by the way, was divested of much of its former grandeur — all the trees bordering the avenue having been cut down) were fewer than of old. The few slaves, owned by Mrs. Templeton, had gone away. Aunt Dinah and Caleb, of course, remained. Indeed, nothing could have driven them from the old place.

Again Caleb was perched upon the gate-post, as on that memorable day when he had watched for Katie.

"I shall not go to sleep for Mar's Jack's benefit, though," laughed Katie merrily, remembering Jack's "nap" on that summer day, so long ago.

How happy she was! and how pretty she looked in the soft black dress, that made her look "so fair, so young."

She thought of all her life at Woodburn—the sunshine and the shadow. Perhaps much trouble and sorrow had overshadowed her young life; and yet, as she stood upon the veranda looking down the road, and shading the blue eyes with her hand, she felt very, very happy. When Mar's Jack came, her cup of happiness would be full—full to overflowing.

"Dah comes de kerridge, Miss Katie," called Caleb, eagerly, springing from the gate-post, and trotting down the road.

"Here comes the carriage, Mrs. Templeton," echoed Katie, calling in at the window as she watched Caleb run down the road and get into the carriage. She hurried to the gateway! Oh, why was Pompey so slow?

At last, the carriage stopped, and Caleb jumped out; then came Mar's Jack. Why did Katie's heart stand still?

It was the same Mar's Jack—thinner, paler perhaps, and yet, one sleeve hung empty at his side.

The shock was great. Mrs. Templeton had withheld the truth from her. She recovered herself instantly. How her heart yearned towards him! and she ran forward with outstretched arms.

"Katie, little girl," he said, gently stooping to kiss the upturned face; and yet, there was something of pain in his voice.

"Oh, I am so, so glad to see you!" walking at his side, and talking eagerly. "I have been so lonely without you!"

"Have you, child?" speaking in the same gentle tone. "I, too, have missed you very much."

Then he became silent, and walked to the house with a grave, pre-occupied manner.

Mrs. Templeton's eyes filled with tears as he bent over her, and she kissed him—oh, so tenderly! He was doubly dear to her now.

It was a very quiet tea table; but in the evening Katie exerted herself to the utmost. She sang the old Scotch ballads Jack loved so well, and talked of the old merry days, and of their life during Jack's absence. All the while Mar's Jack sat looking straight before him, with the same grave, pre-occupied air.

"By the by, Mar's Jack," said Katie, gayly, "How on earth did Billy get back?"

Jack roused himself.

"Is Billy here?" he asked, with an attempt at a smile. "Poor little fellow, he had a hard time of it. I lost him one day; but how he got back here, he will have to tell you. I can not."

Katie laughed.

"Well, he did come back to us. Could not stay away from Caleb, I suppose. Indeed, I always thought there was an affinity between those two. But changing the subject, Mar's Jack, did you know that Mr. Ashely and Jessie Fairfax are married?"

Jack looked surprised.

"Indeed! How did that happen?"

Katie clapped her hands.

"O, that's a secret! I arranged it all, and it was such fun to see them walk right into the trap.

"Yes, Jessie has followed in the footsteps of her forefathers or foremothers, as Wilton used to say. Poor Wilton!" she added gently.

Jack sighed deeply.

"Poor Wilton? No — perhaps not. Death is preferable to some things," and he relapsed into silence again.

Katie stole a glance at him from under the long lashes.

How thin and pale he looked—handsome still—but yet very changed. There was a sadness about the well shaped mouth, and there were heavy circles, under the grave troubled eyes. So changed! And yet Katie's heart yearned towards him as never before.

"Do not sit up too late, Jack, dear," said Mrs. Templeton, rising and breaking the silence. "Good night," and she kissed him tenderly.

"Can't I comed in a little while, ef I 'haves?" pleaded a voice as Mrs. Templeton opened the door.

"No—Jack's tired. Run away, now."

But Caleb grew importunate.

"I ain't seed him fur eber so long. Can't I come in jes' a little while. I'll be jes' awful good."

"Yes, let him come a little while, mother.

"Here's a stool at my feet, Caleb," he added, after his mother had gone, and Caleb seated himself delightedly.

"Dis jes' seems liken ole times, don' it Miss Katie?"

Katie smiled.

"Yes, indeed it does, child."

"An' efery fings a gwine ter be nice after dis ain't it?"

"I hope so, Caleb."

“An’ you ain’t a gwine ter get mad wid Mar’s Jack no mo’ is yer?”

“Indeed, I hope not,” she answered in a low tone, stealing another glance at Mar’s Jack.

He had been sitting very quiet.

“Caleb,” he said at last, speaking in a low bitter tone, “have you any plans for the future or are you ‘all at sea’ like the rest of us penniless beggars?”

Caleb looked up curiously.

“What’s dat?”

“A penniless beggar? O, a man who hasn’t a cent in the world, child.”

Caleb grinned.

“Lawd! den I mus’ a been dat all my life. Kase I nebber had a penny but onct, an’ I lost dat ’hind de hen house.”

Jack smiled, but rather sadly.

“Well, yours is the happiest age, after all, boy,” he said gloomily.

Then all became silent, Katie wondering why Mar’s Jack did not speak to her.

Of what was he thinking so intently?

Something seemed to trouble him.

After a long pause, he rose slowly and came and

stood back of her chair, resting his hand gently upon the brown head.

“Katie,” he said at last, and his voice was low and strange, “Katie I have been thinking of this a long, long time. It is better, that it should be done at once when my resolve is firm.”

Katie’s heart misgave her. What did he mean?

“Katie,” he was speaking slowly, and with difficulty, “you know that—that our engagement, was renewed some time ago. That in those few, short, happy days, I called you mine again. But now—I have only the old homestead, and the wreck of my former self to offer you—now—Katie, little girl—you are free.”

Here he paused, but she sat with her face buried in her hands, and made no answer.

“You see, child, I could not ask you to marry me now. No—no—” as if putting the thought from him, “it would be too great a sacrifice.”

Again he paused, but she did not lift her head.

Caleb sat staring with wide open eyes.

He could not understand all this—but was Miss Katie going to let Mar’s Jack go? “’Deed he wisht he could punch her head fur her, ’deed he did”

Mar’s Jack’s face was deadly pale.

He would do his duty, even though his heart were breaking. Katie could never be his now—No, her youth—her beauty—her fortune were all barriers, impassable barriers, between them. It would be wrong—unjust to hold her to this engagement. They must part.

“You see, child,” Jack’s voice was very low and broken, “it is much better that we should part. Am I not right?”

But again no answer.

“Yes, much better so—much better so. But O, Katie,” and Mar’s Jack broke down completely, “I have loved you *so, so dearly*.”

Katie sprang up and stood before him with shining eyes.

“Give you up, Mar’s Jack? Give up my life,—my happiness? Don’t you know that you are dearer, a thousand times dearer than ever before,” and she held out her arms to him.

He stood hesitatingly a moment.

“Do not mistake your own heart, child. Is this a sense of honor, or is it love?”

Those soft arms stole about his neck.

“Love and love only, *dear, dear* Mar’s Jack.”

He held her close to his heart as though he would never release her.

"I ask for nothing else in this world, my darling," he whispered fervently.

While Caleb, after staring to his heart's content, sprang up and totally regardless of orders, turned three summersaults and began to sing,

"O, I'se a gwine ter be an angel, hallelujah,
I'se a gwine ter be an angel, sho'."

THE END.



